

# TRAVELS IN MEXICO

AND

## LIFE AMONG THE MEXICANS

BY

FREDERICK A. OBER

AUTHOR OF

"YOUNG FOLKS' HISTORY OF MEXICO" "CAMPS IN THE CARIBBEES" ETC.

I.

YUCATAN

II.

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN MEXICO

III.

THE BORDER STATES

IV.

MEXICAN RESOURCES

WITH 190 ILLUSTRATIONS

MAINLY FROM THE AUTHOR'S PHOTOGRAPHS AND SKETCHES

REVISED EDITION

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## PREFACE.

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**"IT is difficult,"** wrote an English author of celebrity, **"for a person,** who is desirous to lay before the public an impartial view of the present state of Mexico, to determine exactly at what point to commence his undertaking." This difficulty has stared the author in the face ever since his first trip to Mexico; but it has seemed to him that there has been an increasing popular demand for a work which, while conducting the reader by pleasant paths through the most interesting portions of the Republic, should convey at the same time information of lasting value.

Hence, during the nine months devoted to travel and exploration, and the two years and more given to a study of the history and customs of the Mexican people, he has ever kept in mind the great popular desire, now so decidedly expressed, for a book on Mexico which should relate, in plain and simple language, the fascinating story of its history as it is interwoven with scenes visited, and should describe the wonderful development now taking place through the agency of the millions of American capital invested in railway construction and the exploitation of mines. At the time of the author's visit to Yucatan and Central and Southern Mexico, he devoted more attention to the natural features and historic surroundings of his journey than to the material wealth of the country; but the great progressive movement, initiated by the opening of the railroads, could not fail to awaken in him an interest in the present and future of Mexico, as well as in its past. Returning to the United States, his narrative of travel was nearly ready for the press early in 1883, but perceiving, as he thought, a greater need of the public for full and authoritative statements regarding the resources of Mexico, and descriptions of the Border region, written from the standpoint of personal observation, he laid aside his manuscript for a while and essayed another journey southward. By this time the great railroads, which were hardly beyond their inception at the period of his first visit, had entered Mexico at several points, and he travelled along the entire Mexican boundary line, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of California, accomplishing a

journey by rail of over ten thousand miles, some distance of which was through a region not often traversed and but little known. Two years later, availing himself of the opportunities afforded by the completion of the great through lines to the city of Mexico, he made a third journey into the Mexican Republic, embracing all the great cities of the table-land, and everything of interest not previously seen. Thus, his Mexican journeys aggregate over twenty-five thousand miles, by sea and land, and extend over a period of four years. He has had the satisfaction, during this extended period of observation, of seeing Mexico develop on the lines of progress and prosperity. Through the sagacity of its political leaders, though by methods which may seem to outside observers questionable, the country has been preserved in tranquillity, and internal commerce developed as never before. The author must not be understood as indorsing any political or commercial enterprise whatever looking towards Mexico, the success of which is, to say the least, problematical; but he intended merely to point out a field for *ultimate emprise* of exceeding great value to the United States. Hence the book was written as from the stand-point of a decade beyond the present, and needs no new Preface to this latest edition.

Having said in the previous Preface what he thought necessary as a brief introductory, he will not burden his readers with any additional matter. He would add, incorporating the substance of his first prefatory note, that it would be impossible for him to enumerate, in the short space at his disposal, the authors and friends, at home and in Mexico, to whom he has been under obligation. Except to call attention to the fact that he has examined nearly every prominent work extant on Mexico, the author feels that any mention of the various books on the subject would be a superfluous labor. It is hoped that the wide scope of this book, including as it does nearly every topic of interest, people, customs, historical references, antiquities, and natural productions, and its carefully prepared and exhaustive index, will make it valuable, to every person interested—even though remotely—in the progress of Mexico. To this end, the numerous engravings and maps have been prepared; and by means of the latter one may trace the extension of our vast system of railways towards its ultimate destination, the continent of South America.

The wide-spread interest in Mexico is manifested by the thousands of tourists now visiting that country every year, and by the constantly

increasing demand for the author's lectures on the subject, which have been delivered in nearly every section of the United States, and are in their seventh season of successful operation.

It remains only to add, that this edition of "Travels in Mexico" has been brought up to date in all matters of importance, and is made of greater value than previous editions by the addition of fifty pages of statistical material, collated, and in the main translated, by the author from that great work, the *Estadística de la Republica Mexicana*.

The soil, climate, and productions of every section are shown, with its distinctive features, — the great coffee, sugar, and cotton districts, with a full list of all the precious dye and cabinet woods, delicious fruits, and medicinal plants, which make tropical Mexico so valuable a neighbor to the United States.

Under "Mines and Mining" are given the locations of the great deposits of precious metals ; abstracts from the mining laws of Mexico, for the guidance of those desiring to locate mines ; and full information on the exact localities of the gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, quicksilver, and coal deposits, and the valuable Mexican minerals.

The facts are given without exaggeration, and at the same time without depreciation ; and the reader may draw his own deductions as to Mexico's future from this accurate presentation of her productions in the past.

What the writer stated in the Preface to the first edition, this he now reiterates. There being no longer any "Great West" to which trade and travel may flow, it is believed that our country of the future lies in the South, — that Greater South, — in Mexico, Central and South America.

BEVERLY, *Massachusetts*, May 7, 1887.

TO  
STEPHEN SALISBURY, Esq.,  
Of Worcester, Massachusetts,

WHOSE ACQUAINTANCE, BEGUN THROUGH A COMMON INTEREST IN AMERICAN  
ARCHÆOLOGY, HAS RIPENED INTO A FRIENDSHIP,  
TO WHICH THE AUTHOR  
HEREBY GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES HIS INDEBTEDNESS.

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BOOK I.



YUCATAN.

“WORLD wrongly called the New ! this clime was old  
When first the Spaniard came, in search of gold.  
Age after age its shadowy wings had spread,  
And man was born, and gathered to the dead ;  
Cities arose, ruled, dwindled to decay,  
Empires were formed, then darkly swept away :  
Race followed race, like cloud-shades o'er the field,  
The stranger still to strangers doomed to yield.  
The last grand line that swayed these hills and waves,  
Like Israel, wandered long 'mid wilds and caves,  
Then, settling in their Canaan, cities reared,  
Fair Science wooed, a milder God revered,  
Till to invading Europe bowed their pride,  
And pomp, art, power, with Montezuma, died.”

## I.

### A GLIMPSE OF YUCATAN.

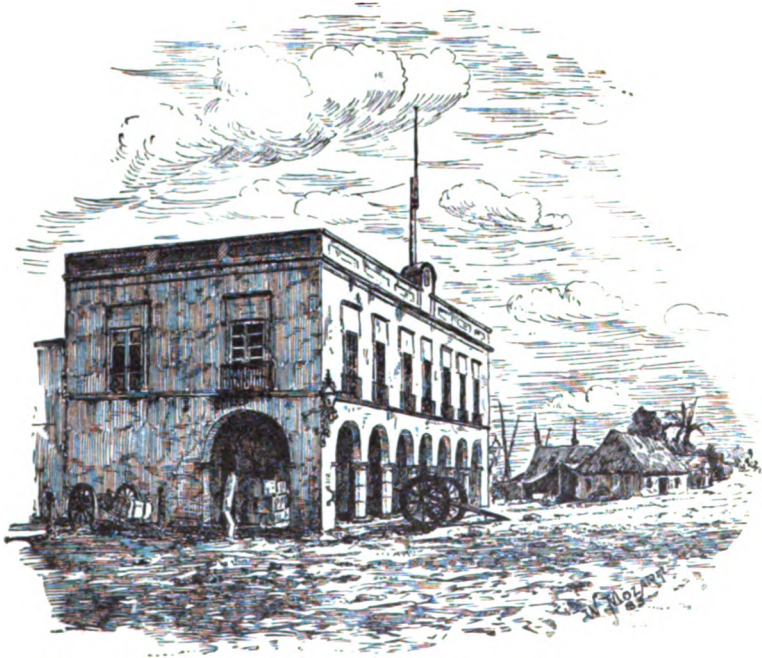
“**W**E sailed at hazard towards that part of the horizon where the sun set.” In these words Captain Bernal Diaz, companion of Cortés, tells of the approach of the Spanish fleet to Yucatan, in 1517.

We came, like those first Spanish navigators, from the east, from the fair island of Cuba, and we too sought the land that lay beyond the western horizon; but not at hazard, and when a long, low line of sand appeared, one morning, we knew it was the coast of the mysterious peninsula.

Easternmost land of Mexico, it presents the farther front of that ancient continent that may once have extended to Cuba, and beyond,—to Atlantis, to Africa. Without it, perhaps, there would have been no Gulf Stream; and that warm river of the sea, diverted from our Northern shores, would have fertilized and vivified other countries instead. Had it not stood so boldly out, inviting those reckless Spaniards to conquest and plunder, Mexico might have remained till now as the aboriginal Culua, and the world of to-day be enjoying the benefits of its wonderful civilization. But what Yucatan might have been had it been different, or left to the people who ruled it four hundred years ago, we may better speculate upon after we have seen it. Let us go on shore.

The coast lay full in sight at daybreak, and at nine o'clock the steamer anchored, several miles from shore. Scarce rising above the sea, a white sand-bank, relieved by groups of palms, a few tile-covered houses, and a long wharf, lay blazing in the sun. This was Progreso, only port of entry of Yucatan. Some vessels lay at anchor there, and a dozen lighters put out from

the beach and sailed towards us. As they neared the steamer, we could note that their crews wore cotton garments, and were clean; some wore no shirts, and some no trousers, but all were clean. This is said to be the notable difference between Yucatecans and Aztecs: these are clean, those are dirty.



THE CUSTOM-HOUSE.

The wind was fair, we were soon on shore, and the customs officials were examining our luggage. Then we were conducted to the hotel, a thatched structure with stone walls, and a sleeping apartment over the stable. This dormitory contained four hammocks and a wash-basin; and enough spiders and scorpions were supposed to lurk in the thatch overhead to make it interesting.

Besides the hotel and the custom-house, there were a few score of tiled houses and thatched huts, several stores, a market,

and a church. As the shipping port for the vast quantities of Sisal hemp raised in Yucatan, this place is of great importance; and as it has a reputation for health, though very hot, it is much resorted to in summer by people from the interior. It has only one wharf, or jetty, which is provided with wooden cranes, and is over five hundred feet long. There is no harbor here, and all vessels are obliged to anchor far from shore, the steamers at a distance of three miles. This open roadstead is exposed to all the winds that blow, and in the season of "northerners" is positively unsafe. The old port of Sisal, some distance farther down the coast, has been abandoned; and as it has no railroad into the interior, it will never more be the place of export for the hemp that bears its name, and which constitutes the wealth of the country.

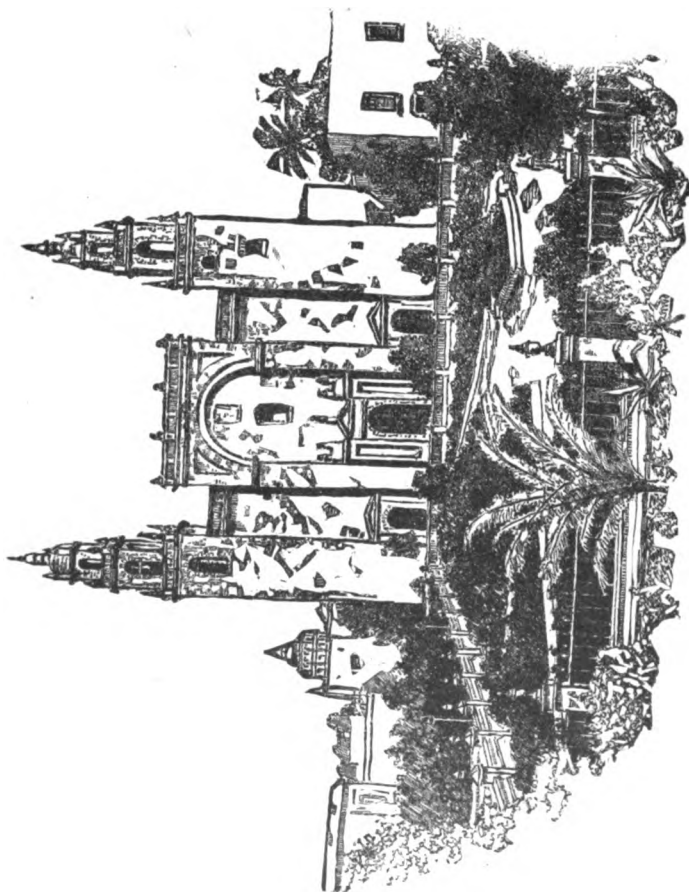
A railroad connects Progreso with Merida, a distance of twenty-five miles; and though all the iron, equipments, and rolling-stock for that road were brought from England and the United States and landed at the port, they were carted to the interior terminus and the road commenced at that end. At first sight, this will seem one of the foolish undertakings of that unprogressive country; but let us see. The contractor wished to secure at once the benefit of freights, and, as all the hemp came from the interior, it was advisable, apparently, to begin at the end nearest the freight; hence everything was hauled to Merida, and the road begun there. As soon as the first few miles were laid, this wary contractor commenced to haul hemp over his rails by mule power, so far as they went. Again, he got a concession, or grant of money from the government, for every mile of road when finished. The portion nearest Merida was the easiest to build, and all the laborers were there also. Thus, in many ways, did this sagacious man make his enterprise pay him from the very start, until to-day it is considered one of the most profitable railroads in the world. According to the terms of his contract with the government, the owner of the railroad was compelled to carry passengers from port to capital for a certain reasonable sum, when it should be completed. As a consequence, he built to within a mile or two of the coast, and

then charged at a very unreasonable rate; now, however, it is finished. There are two trains daily each way, besides the freight cars, forenoon and afternoon.

Back of the dunes of the coast there is a broad lagoon, hundreds of miles in length, varying in depth and breadth with the season. Here many of our Northern summer birds spend the winter: duck and teal, snowy-plumaged herons, ibis and egrets, snipe and sandpipers, curlews, snake-birds, and cormorants. Beyond the lagoon, the bed of coral rock, composing the entire territory of Yucatan, rises above the level of the water. The vegetation is not exuberant, and the soil is thin and dry.

Soon after leaving the lagoon, the road passes through the *henequen* plantations, with miles and miles of Sisal hemp on either side the track, the immense fields neatly walled, to prevent the roaming cattle from getting in and eating the plant. The dwellings of the planters are surrounded with coco palms, and are approached by long lanes terminating in arched stone gateways. Excepting the hemp plantations, there is little to interest one, as the prevailing vegetation is low and scrubby. But the people alone are sufficiently strange to Northern eyes, for they are wholly peculiar to this country; they are Indians, descendants of the original inhabitants found here by Cortés and Cordova. We meet them in little groups that grow larger as we near the city suburbs, until (this being Sunday, and consequently a holiday) they pass along the road in processions of hundreds. The men and women are all neatly clad in garments of white, white as snow, the former wearing shirts with ruffled bosoms and plaited backs, the women their traditional dress of three centuries ago, — a skirt from the waist to the ankles, and an outside *nipil*, or overskirt, from the shoulders to the knees. It is evident that the engine has not ceased to be a wonder with them, as many have a timorous expression on their faces, and every time the whistle blows, or steam escapes, start back in affright. It seemed that intense curiosity only had overcome their fear of this monster. These great crowds of Indians, gathered here to inspect the steam marvel of the white man, recall to mind those passages in the narratives of the explorers of this





CATHEDRAL AND PLAZA.



country, when the ancestors of these same people collected by thousands, eventually to oppose the march of the invaders, but prompted solely at first by no stronger motive than that of curiosity.

The train, drawn by an American engine and composed mainly of cars manufactured in the States, passed through a narrow, crowded street, and rested finally at the station. As in Northern cities, there were cabmen here, but they were perfectly indifferent as to whether one hired them or not. We finally captured one, succeeded in making him understand that we wished to engage him, and were driven through broad streets, between stone-walled houses, to the hotel.

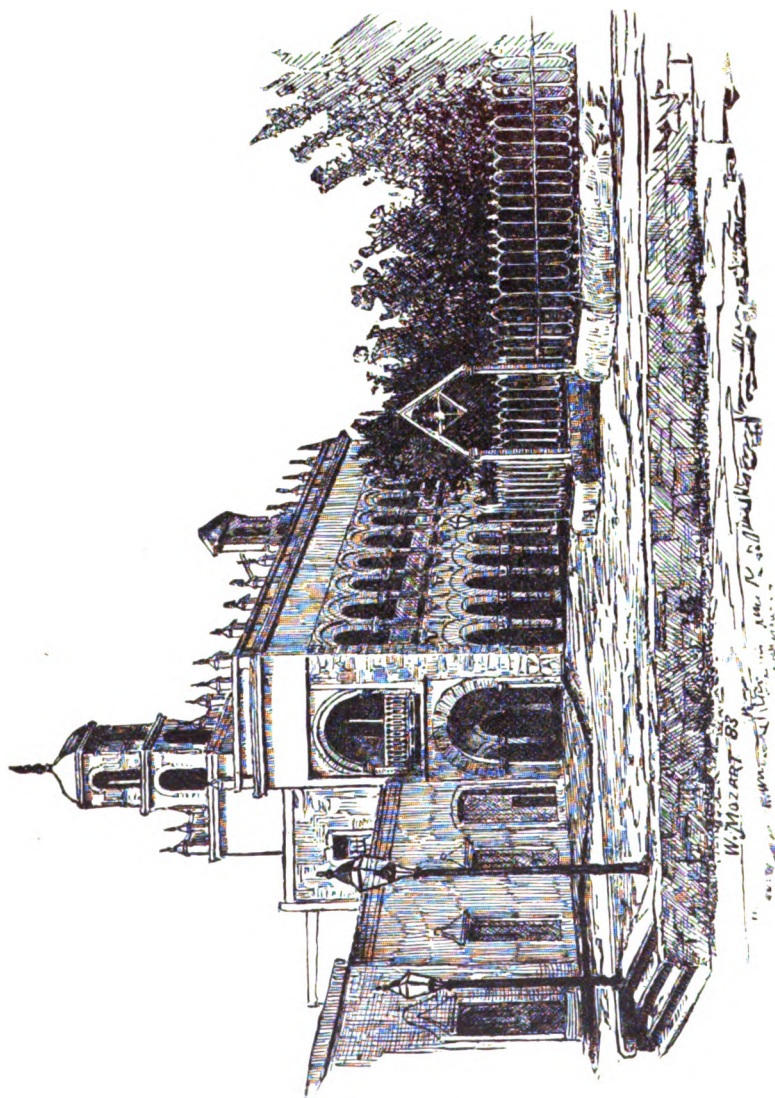
The buildings display a style of architecture peculiar to the country, combining with the picturesqueness of Moorish and Spanish something that recalls the ruins of the Indian civilization upon which they are built. The larger structures, such as the hospital, Governor's palace, and city hall, have balconies projecting from their upper windows, while many of them are supported upon arches, the long colonnades of which have an imposing appearance. Most prominent among the peculiar features are the grated windows of all the houses. There is no glass in use here, but every window is enclosed by a grating of half-inch iron bars, which projects from the wall about a foot. Through these prison-suggestive windows, as we rode along in the gloom of early evening, I could see most attractive groups of lovely faces. Though there were here and there some with pale complexion, many that we saw that evening seemed of Indian descent. All had black hair, and great black, lustrous eyes, and most of them looked quite bewitching,—as they should, for they were *señoritas*, young ladies and misses.

The Hotel Mexico, where we stopped, faced the *Plaza Mayor*, or great central square, about which are arranged the principal buildings: the cathedral, with lofty towers and walls two centuries old, fronts the *Casa Municipal*, or city hall, erected sixty years ago; the hotel is one of a long block supported upon effective arches of masonry; opposite it, on the south side of the Plaza, is the oldest house in the city, built in 1549. A great

mound once covered the space now occupied by the *Plaza Mayor*, and on and around it, in 1540, a terrible battle was fought,—forty thousand Indians against two hundred Spaniards, says the old historian. The mound was razed, and from its materials and the many pyramids of stone erected by the Indians in ages past, the city of Merida was built. The last of these mounds, an immense artificial elevation containing an aboriginal arch, has just been dug away for the building-stone composing it.

There are fifteen plazas in the city, and each one has facing it a church; like the cathedral, erected in 1667, on the great plaza, of ancient date and most attractive and quaint architecture. Though these churches are now impoverished, and some of them in decay, the number of the faithful is sufficient to maintain a suggestion of former grandeur. Since the expulsion of the Jesuits, some twenty years ago, religious processions have been forbidden, the various streets and plazas have changed names, and many large colleges and monasteries have changed owners. One of the pleasantest of the squares is the *Parque Hidalgo*, formerly known as the *Plaza de Jesus*. The largest of all had a fountain, which is soon to be replaced by a fine statue of marble, in its centre, smooth walks, an abundance of flowers, and is shaded by trees. The streets of the city cross each other at right angles; they were formerly designated by figures of birds and beasts, as the bulk of the Indian population could not read. On each corner was painted the figure representing the street, or an image was perched on the wall. Few of these objects remain, but one may yet find the "Street of the Elephant," of the "Flamingo," and the "Street of the Two Faces." The elephant is large as an ox, with a body big as a barrel, and curved trunk and tusks. Nearly all the streets of the city terminate in ancient gateways, high arching above the pavement, with niches and spaces in them, containing some saint, the Virgin, or a cross.

Though under the federal government of Mexico, the State of Yucatan has its separate governor and legislature. The Governor is generally an efficient man, and interested in the welfare and



CASA MUNICIPAL.



development of the country. He has a salary of \$4,000, with an appropriation of \$16,000 for himself and staff, in which this is included. The Lieutenant-Governor gets \$1,500, the Vice-Governor and Council, \$5,000, total. Other salaries are: —

Judicial body (twelve members) . . . . .	\$16,500
Clerks, etc. . . . .	13,500
Remaining officials, about . . . . .	35,000

The appropriations for the year 1881 were: —

For public schools, about . . . . .	\$50,000
Public improvements, railroads, roads, etc. . . . .	43,000
Police . . . . .	14,000
National Guard . . . . .	25,000

Every man, from twenty-one years to fifty, is subject to military duty, and may at any time be drafted. He then gets the extraordinary pay of *six cents per day*, and finds himself in food.

The total budget for 1881 was about \$300,000, of which the officials absorbed such a portion as seemed to them best for the public good — and themselves. It is a noteworthy fact, that, out of the various sums appropriated, but \$300 was set aside for the Museum: this in a country richer in archæological remains than any other known portion of America. But a fact still worthier of comment is, that they should have established a museum at all. The *Museo Yucateco* is not large nor well conducted, and its few specimens are poorly arranged; but it contains many a prize that our archæologists would like to secure.

There are several newspapers here, the *Eco* and the *Revista* being the commercial papers. The former is published three times a week, the latter daily, and both are very well edited. There are also a semi-weekly official organ, and two religious papers, one Catholic and one independent. There is a bank in Merida, and drafts can also be obtained on New York and Europe from the hemp exporters, who are the heaviest business men of the city. Premium on drafts about fifteen per cent, at sixty days' sight. The rate of interest here is from

one to two per cent a month. Travellers coming here should bring American gold, as it is always at a high premium and pays no duty.

For a city so isolated, and in a climate so totally antagonistic to the development of literary talent, Merida contains many writers of more than local distinction. Her list embraces authors of valuable historical works, writers of fiction, poetry, and the drama. One work, a Dictionary of the Maya, the aboriginal language of the peninsula, is especially valuable; and a recent drama written here has been produced in Havana and Madrid. It may seem strange that men of education and reputation should prefer to live in this remote section of the world; but there seems to be a charm about this old city that draws them to it. There are here men of great wealth, men who have crossed and recrossed the Atlantic, were educated in London and Paris, and have passed years on the Continent, who yet love the city beyond anything else in the world.

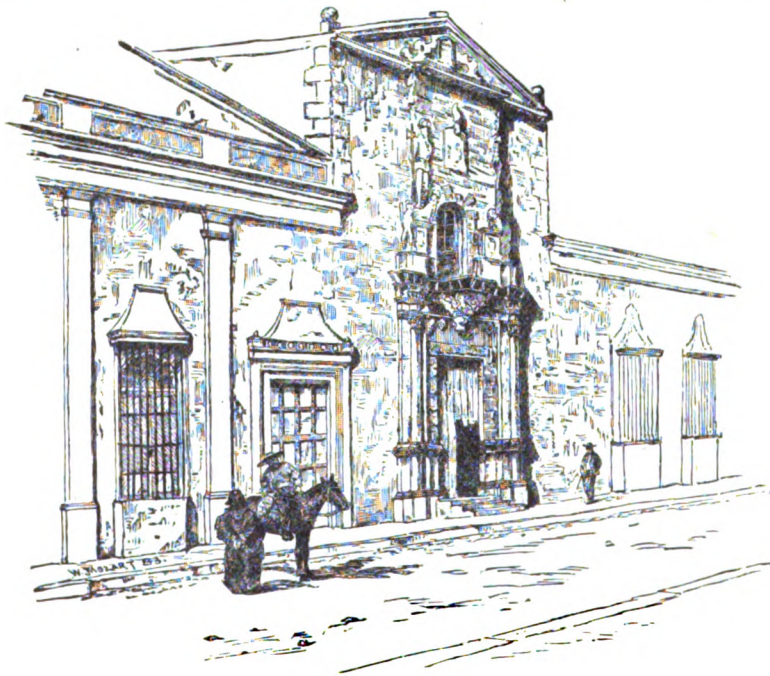
Though lying just midway between Havana and Vera Cruz in point of longitude, — cities smitten with yellow-fever every summer, — Merida rarely suffers from this scourge. But few cases annually occur, it not often becomes epidemic, and it is said that at no time has the *vomito* existed in Merida and in its seaport, Progreso, at the same time. The city is generally in a very healthy condition, though its only supply of water is derived from the clouds and from subterranean caverns.

The climate is hot as the hottest, but the furnace heat of mid-day is tempered by cool breezes; night and day the wind is blowing, rendering life more than endurable here. The temperature ranges from about seventy-five to ninety-eight degrees, in the shade. Though one would suppose the hottest months would be August and September, yet it is said that March and April have that distinction, when, added to the heat generated by the sun, is that from burning corn-fields, which are fired all over the country.

The houses are freer from vermin than is usual in tropical countries, owing perhaps to their manner of construction. There are two thick walls with a filling of stone, sometimes from four



to six feet deep. The rooms are lofty and spacious, though generally barren of ornament, and washed or painted white. The great beams supporting the stone roof are visible overhead, and are painted a different color. The floors are cemented, the courts tiled, and there is no woodwork except in the doors and windows. Rooms of this vault-like character are gloomy and depressing to a stranger, but they at least offer no harbor of refuge



ANCIENT HOUSE.

for spiders, centipedes, or scorpions, and one may retire to his hammock with a sense of security not always felt within the tropics. The furniture of these houses is simple and plain, and, except in those of the very rich, there is little beyond what necessity requires. No earthquakes or hurricanes disturb the equanimity of the Yucatecos, their heaviest blows seldom exceeding the limits of *temporales*, or strong winds. Many of the

houses here were built two hundred years ago, and their beams and rafters are as hard as iron. The most ancient of these old buildings is one erected in the year 1549, by the Adelantado, Don Francisco Montejo, the conqueror of Yucatan. Its façade is a grotesque combination of Moorish-Indian architecture, representing knights in armor trampling upon prostrate Indians.

The lamented archæologist, J. L. Stephens, whose writings on the ruins of Central America and Yucatan have secured him permanent fame, resided here forty years ago, in company with his artist, Mr. Catherwood, and Dr. Cabot, of Boston. The house he then occupied, and rented at four dollars a month, is now leased for sixty dollars. A corresponding rise in real estate has been steady, and now it is next to impossible to find a house to let or for sale. Business is active, prices ranging about the same as in Havana. To summarize a comprehensive glance over the State, the following figures are appended: Capital and largest city, Merida; port of entry, Progreso;

Number of other cities . . . . .	7
Towns . . . . .	13
Villages . . . . .	143
Abandoned settlements . . . . .	15
Haciendas . . . . .	333
Ruined cities . . . . .	62

Many of the "cities" are beginning to decay; many of the "towns" are composed entirely of thatched huts, and many of the *haciendas* comprise enormous estates, with mile on mile of territory; so that Yucatan, though dotted with indications of civilization on the map, is yet mainly a wilderness, with perhaps less territory developed than when Cordova landed here, or when Montejo conquered its aboriginal inhabitants.

## II.

### YUCATECOS.

A BIT of history might be quoted here, to the better understanding of the country, the people, and their institutions; and without further parley we will turn to the description given by Ferdinand Columbus of the first Indians from Yucatan that the eye of Spaniard ever looked on. It was on the fourth and last voyage of the Great Admiral, in 1502, when, driven by currents out of his southerly course from San Domingo, he sighted a group of islands off Honduras, and captured a cañoe, formed of the trunk of a single tree, eight feet wide and as long as a galley. "In the middle was an awning of palm leaves, not unlike those of the Venetian gondolas, under which were the women, children, and all the goods. The canoe was under the direction of twenty-five Indians. They had cotton coverlets and tunics without sleeves, curiously worked and dyed of various colors [exactly the same as are worn in Yucatan at the present day], covering for the loins of similar material, large mantles, in which the Indian women wrapped themselves, like the Moorish women of Grenada; long swords with channels on each side the blade, edged with sharp flints that cut the body as well as steel; hatchets of copper for cutting wood, bells of the same material, and crucibles in which to melt it. For provisions they had such roots and grains as the natives of Hispaniola (Haiti) eat, a sort of wine made of maize and great quantities of almonds (*cacao*)<sup>1</sup> of the kind used by the people of New Spain for money. The Spaniards were also struck with the personal modesty of these Indians, in which they greatly excelled the natives of the islands."

<sup>1</sup> The seeds of the Cacao — *Theobroma cacao* — are still used as small change in barter amongst the poorer classes of Southern Mexico.

Columbus sailed to the south; how much better would it have been for him had he sailed west! "Within a day or two," says Irving, "he would have arrived at Yucatan; the discovery of Mexico and the other opulent countries of New Spain would have necessarily followed; the Southern Ocean would have been disclosed to him, and a succession of splendid discoveries would have shed fresh glory on his declining age, instead of its sinking amidst gloom, neglect, and disappointment."

Four years later, in 1506, Juan Diaz de Solis, afterwards discoverer of the Rio de la Plata, and Vicente Yanez Pinzon, who commanded a ship in the first voyage of Columbus, and was so unfairly treated by him, entered the Gulf of Honduras and saw the east coast of Yucatan. They departed, however, without any attempt at exploration, lured by vague reports of gold in the south, and to Cordova and his companions must be awarded the glory of bringing Yucatan to the notice of the world, and of opening the way for its acquisition by the Spaniards.

This venture of Hernandez de Cordova, in 1517, though it yielded him and his comrades scarcely any reward save the consciousness of having found a new country, (all of his company being wounded and many of them killed in encounters with the natives,) yet first made known the existence of a land whose inhabitants were decently clothed, and built houses of stone and lime.

Following in the wake of that stout old soldier and chronicler, Bernal Diaz, who was with Cordova, we shall need no other guide through the historic portion of Mexico, for he attended its christening and was in at the death.<sup>1</sup> Undaunted by his wounds of the previous year, he sailed with Juan de Grijalva, in 1518, in which memorable voyage he coasted the entire northern and western shores of Yucatan, and reached under this

<sup>1</sup> "Bernal Diaz del Castillo is the best that ever writ of the Conquest of Mexico, as having been an Eye Witness to all the principal Actions there; and has an air of Sincerity; writing in a plain Style, and sparing none where he could see any Fault.

"Cortés' Letters cannot be contradicted, he having been the chief Agent in the Conquest of Mexico, but he being more taken up with Acting than Writing, could not give them all their Perfection." — Herrera, Stevens's translation, 1740.

commander the site of the present city of Vera Cruz. In 1519 this intrepid soul again set sail for Yucatan, in the service of Hernando Cortés, whom he followed through all his wanderings; and in this manner unconsciously collected the material for the best and most truthful history of the conquest of Mexico that has been given to the world.

The richer country of Mexico attracted all the captains and soldiers thither, and Yucatan remained comparatively unnoticed for a decade of years after its discovery. In the year 1527 the gallant Don Francisco de Montejo obtained a grant from the king of Spain for its conquest and colonization. Landing first at the island of Cozumel, off the east coast of Yucatan, he attempted to march into the interior from the shore of the peninsula opposite, but everywhere met with determined opposition from the Indians. It was not until the year 1537 that, Don Francisco having been driven from the territory, his son again effected a landing near Campeche. From that date to the great battle at T'ho (Merida), in 1540, the Spaniards were constantly fighting; but they finally triumphed — only to find that this country, which they had so desperately battled for and which its native inhabitants had so bravely defended, contained not a single mine of gold or silver, nor anything to reward them for their conquest.

Since this period, the history of Yucatan has been mainly uneventful to the world at large. The people, the first shedders of European blood in New Spain, and apparently ferocious and sanguinary, readily yielded to the Spaniards, quickly embraced the religion of the usurpers, and settled down to the cultivation of the arts of peace. In the year 1761 occurred a great uprising of the *raza indigena*, or aborigines; and again in 1847 a numerous body revolted and fled to the southeastern portion of the peninsula, which they still occupy. For thirty years and more there have been Indians with their war-paint on, rebels against the authority of the government. Though living in the eastern portion of the country, they now and then make raids in the direction of Merida, causing great excitement; they have depopulated a large extent of country, and caused towns and

even cities to be abandoned. A notable example is the city of Valladolid, once a large and flourishing centre of trade, noted for its manufactures of cotton, but now nearly abandoned and in ruins.

In numbers, these Indians are not strong, the largest estimates being no higher than seven thousand; in fact, there are not probably more than two thousand. They are, however, fierce and revengeful, — a different people, seemingly, from the timorous Indians of Merida, whose ancestors probably built the magnificent temples that now lie in ruins throughout Yucatan. They are more like the Caribs, the people that once possessed the southern West Indies, the Spanish Main, and the Mesquita Coast. Though few in number, they have succeeded in completely terrorizing the entire country, and are as difficult to find as were the Seminoles of Florida forty years ago. The wildest stories circulate about them, and the people of the city tremble at their very name. If a stranger penetrate to their country, they seize him at once and hack him in pieces with their *machetes* without listening to a word of explanation; or they reserve him for torture, tying him by a long line to a stake by a ring through the nose.

Though so atrociously cruel, yet who can blame them, when he remembers the torments inflicted upon the ancestors of these people by the early Spaniards? To them, every man with a pale face is a Spaniard, whose abhorred presence is to be rid of by death. They hold guarded intercourse with the English in Belize, but allow no white man to penetrate to their city. This city, whose inhabitants must yet retain much of their aboriginal simplicity, much of ancient cunning in the arts of their progenitors, — what traveller would not like to visit and describe it?

Annually, their territory is increasing in extent, and that of the whites and agricultural Indians becoming restricted; *ranchos* and *haciendas*, farm and plantation, village and town, — one by one they are destroyed, and the land they covered added to that of the dreaded *sublevados*, or insurgents. It was rumored in 1881 that all the Indians of Yucatan, Central America, and Honduras

were to unite in one general uprising, and it was well known that the Indians of Chan Santa Cruz had sent invitations for a grand council of all the tribes; but the latest advices report that they have buried the hatchet. Every year they send a threatening message to the capital, promising to make its streets run with blood, and to massacre the last inhabitant; and every year the people quake and turn pale, but do nothing to prevent their advance. That advance, if it is ever made, will be along the ridge of the hills that lie south of Merida, commencing at Uxmal and running into the interior, towards the capital of these insurgents, Chan Santa Cruz. Yucatan is incompletely garrisoned by a few Mexican and Federal troops, who once in a while march out into the country in search of the Indians, who retire to their fastnesses; and the troops then triumphantly return, with a great flourish of trumpets — but without any Indians.

From fifty to fifty-five thousand people reside in this city of Merida, the greater portion of whom are Indians, or people directly descended from them, who show in their swarthy skins their native blood. From a union of the two races, Spanish and Indian, result the *Mestizos*, — feminine, *Mestizas*, — or mixed people, who are the handsomest in all Mexico. They are a gentle, docile race, loving pleasure, not always avoiding labor, cleanly in habit, and perfectly honest. Though three centuries have passed away since this territory was subjugated, the Indians and *Mestizos* yet retain many of their ancient customs and dances, and especially the style of dress of the period antecedent to the conquest.

As a servant, the Indian is slothful, but humble, never impudent, always reliable; and a dirty one is indeed a phenomenon. In hiring laborers, whether to work on a plantation or as house servants, you must always advance them money, retaining a percentage from their wages as they come due, to reimburse you. No matter how long a servant may stay with you, he or she will surely leave in your debt; even the washerwoman is no exception. When they desire to go, they do so, previously informing you of their intention. This is generally when they have got a little money ahead; and they lie idle so long as it



lasts. The person next employing them is supposed to assume the debts of the Indian. Imprisonment for debt has been abolished; you cannot force a laborer to work out a debt, and at death all obligation of estate or family ceases. Wages are not high; a good cook gets but two dollars per month, and her assistants even less. A day-laborer gets two *reales* (twenty-five

cents) a day, a good mason from sixty-two cents to one dollar and a half, and his attendants fifty cents; carpenters and blacksmiths, about the same.

The economy of the cuisine is something wonderful in its simplicity, even in the houses of the rich. Starting upon first principles, the Indian and Mestiza women who rule the kitchen prepare the farinaceous food in the same manner as they did a thousand years ago. For hundreds of years, the Indian women of the South have ground the corn for their daily bread, as at the present day, between two stones. They know no other way. One of them, being told that the women of the North had



TORTILLA-SELLER.

no such employment, exclaimed, in surprise, "Why, what do they find to do with themselves?" Night and day, these poor women labor at the mill. The smooth stone at which they work is called a *metate*, from the Aztec *metatl*, and has long been in common use among the Indians all over our continent, specimens having been found in New Jersey, in Mexico, Yucatan, and the West Indies. Upon this metate the corn, pre-



viously softened in alkaline water, is ground to a fine paste, then patted into thin cakes and baked over a quick fire on a thin iron plate or flat stone. The accompanying engraving represents one of the tortilla-makers; the girl herself is a fair type of the Mestiza of the serving class of Yucatan.

These cakes of Indian corn, called *tortillas*, constitute, with *frijoles* (pronounced *free-ho'-les*), the chief food of the poorer classes of all Mexico. Frijoles, it may be well to explain, are *beans*, — nothing more, nothing less; and these good people eat them twice every day, fourteen times a week, and seven or eight hundred times a year. They are always accompanied with *chile*, a kind of red pepper that delights the Mexican stomach, but which is so very hot that few strangers dare approach within a foot of it.

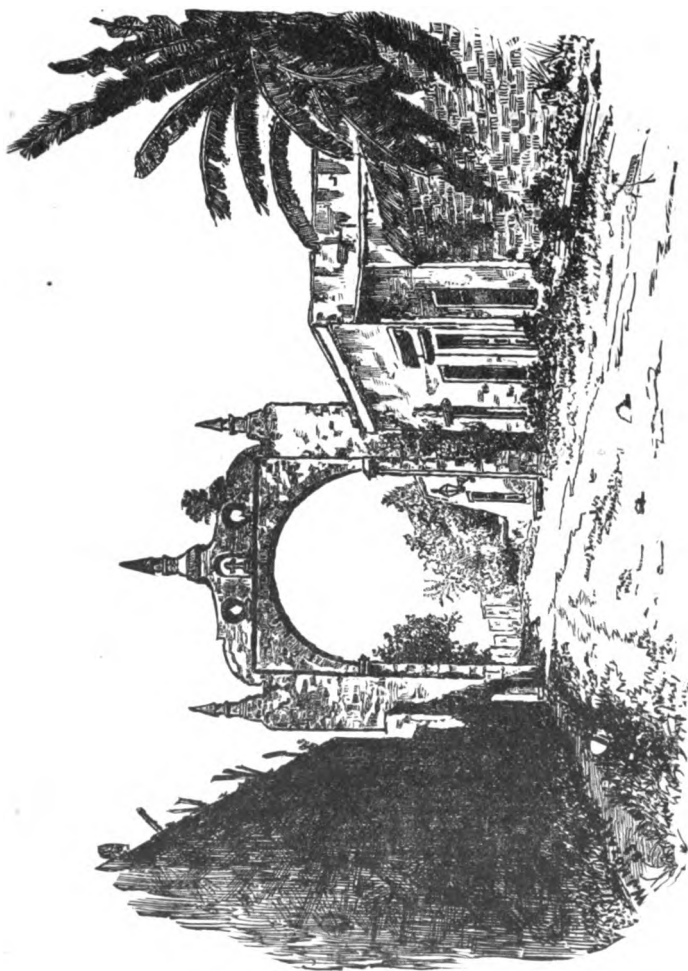
It was to the credit of the United States, and my good fortune, that we had as Consul in Yucatan, at the time of my arrival, a gentleman every way fitted for the position. Consul Aymé, though of French extraction, was a true American. He had twice circled the globe, was with our transit of Venus expedition as mineralogist, in 1874, and possessed rare accomplishments as an educated gentleman and devotee of science. Strangers at that time were rare in Merida, and the good Consul sought me out at the Hotel Mexico, and, with Spanish politeness and more than Spanish sincerity, offered me his house during the period of my stay. To him I am indebted for forty happy days in Yucatan, and for the best disposition of the time at my command. The building occupied by him as the consulate was on the south side of the Plaza, near the antique structure previously mentioned as having been erected by the first Adelantado of Yucatan. From it the various excursions projected for my benefit by my hospitable friend were carried out, embracing not only the interesting portions of the city, but remote points in the country, noted for their ruins or as being the resorts of rare birds.

An interesting place to visit, always, was the market, held in a large court enclosed on every side by high buildings. The entrance was nearly always obstructed by women with fruit to sell,

whose presence was tolerable from the fact that they sold it extremely cheap. For a *medio* (six cents) one could buy a dozen oranges, a bunch of bananas, or a large lot of mangoes. The court was filled with little shelters made by planting a pole in the ground, and making a framework on it like the ribs of an umbrella, and covering it with matting. Beneath each one sat a woman or girl, with her articles for sale spread about and before her, — a little fruit, cabbage, lettuce, or cooked meat. Upon a square of cloth, spread on the pavement, would be half a dozen eggs, right out where everybody was passing, or a few peppers, a bunch of flowers, or a pint of beans. Some of these market-women wore elegantly embroidered uipils; some were pretty, all were modest, and all were peaceable. During the time I was in that country I did not see one quarrelsome or disorderly person, hardly heard a baby cry, or any one raise his voice to another above a tone of polite conversation; the place was crowded, but there was no jostling or confusion.

In a circular space in the *Calle de Hidalgo* is a market devoted entirely to the sale of hats and hammocks, the handiwork of Indians, who squat there all day in the blazing sun. Near this place is the corn-market, a long line of arcades beneath which the merchants sit with corn and beans emptied in heaps on the pavement. There are sold here, also, pottery and fancy wares. Under the castle walls, the mule teams that have come in the night before from the interior are grouped, resting, or waiting for return loads. Above all, the ruined cupolas of the monastery peer over the castle walls that surround it, and the cries and the drumming of the guard occasionally ring out from within. This monastery was built on the ruins of an artificial mound, was of vast proportions, and covered that mysterious arch mentioned by Stephens, which has so long been a puzzle and a stumbling-block to archæologists.

The air of morning is so sweet, so cool, that a walk into the suburbs is almost imperative. The first noises are just preceding daybreak, when the soldiers change guard at the "palace"; then the bells of the cathedral strike up, and shortly after appear dawn and sunrise. Passing through one of the quaint and



A CITY GATE.



ancient gates, you enter at once pleasant and winding lanes, grass-grown and with protruding limestone rocks, with trees thick on either side, and half-wild gardens; but in all this tropic shrubbery there are few birds save the mocking-bird, blackbird, and cardinal.

The few people you meet are unobtrusive, and you may wander on for hours among the peculiar oblong huts, — deeply thatched with grass, so picturesque and so vermin-suggestive, — with women in *négligé* garbs cooking in the yards, and children contentedly playing about them, without hearing a harsh or discordant voice. Here indeed the softness of the climate makes itself felt. Returning at perhaps nine or ten o'clock, you will experience great discomfort from the glare of the sun on the yellow, dust-covered streets. A wise ordinance of the city prohibits the painting of a house white, for this very reason, glare. If such a law were in force in other cities within the region of heat, as in Bermuda or Barbados, for instance, how beneficial it would prove to the people! In those islands everything is white, except the plants, — houses, streets, and sand-hills; and, as if the white stone they build of were not glaring enough, they whitewash the roofs, and wear blue spectacles to mitigate the intensity of the reflected rays of the sun.

Rarely does a visitor to Merida, or indeed to any portion of Mexico, obtain an inside view of life there; but, fortunately for me, while there, society was turned inside out by the occurrence of the carnival. It was near the middle of that memorable sixteenth century that witnessed the conquests of Cuba, of Mexico, and of Peru, that the Spanish invaders founded, upon the ruins of the Indian city of T'ho, this now ancient metropolis, the capital city of Yucatan. Probably no one of the old cities of Mexico has so faithfully preserved its old-time characteristics as this. Though Roman Catholic in their faith, many of its citizens yet cling to their ancient religious rites, practising them, however, only in secret. But there have been also deeply engrafted upon the minds of the people many customs of times more modern than that of the conquest. A city of fifty thousand inhabitants cannot exist in a Catholic country—even one in which

the power of the Church has been so curtailed as in Mexico — without observing the feast-days and the carnival. This latter celebration, thanks to the readily accepted invitation of the United States Consul, I had an excellent opportunity for witnessing.

Four days were devoted to the carnival, and five nights to the balls which form a part of it. Sunday, the 27th of February, was properly the day of opening, though the ball of Saturday night was a brilliant affair. The first indications of the carnival on Sunday morning were from a band of Indians, who personated the wild men of the country in songs and dances, and exhibited for the amusement of themselves and spectators the costumes of their ancestors. These were of the lower classes, who had not attended the ball of the previous night. Soon the streets were alive with people, after the morning mass, and the fun commenced. Though fun-loving and innocent in their amusements, these people have not the fertility of invention necessary to secure artistic effect, or to more than broadly burlesque the customs of their own country. Their best groups were the Indians, who excelled in dancing, and the *estudiantes*, or bands of Spanish students, who went about in costume, singing songs of their own composition.

Let one day in my description suffice as a specimen of all the rest, and let that day be Sunday because everybody was fresh, excited, and animated. After the Indians had passed, and a great crowd of the ordinary "tag-rag and bobtail" of such processions, came the *estudiantes*, a picturesque band, happy, careless, tuneful. Down the street they came, around the corner of the Plaza, in sight of the great cathedral, and halted opposite the consulate. At a signal from their leader, they burst forth into wild, sweet melody, from guitars thrummed by practised hands, flutes, violins, and violoncellos. They handed us some printed songs, and we saw that they were the work of some of Merida's sons, — for they have poets here of no mean rank. Their music was lively and pleasing, and they were so well drilled as to render all their pieces most effectively; the impression left as they passed on was as though one had listened to an opera,

without the fatigue of going to hear it. There were two bands of students, one wearing dark cloaks and *sombreros*, and the other the Mexican colors, flags draped as cloaks, and hats with cockades. They were true students, and patterned after those famous ones of Salamanca, wearing in their hats the traditional spoon, knife and fork, or corkscrew, and with the devil-may-care air of contented and light-hearted youth.

They pass on, and the road is for a moment empty; another shout from the gamins, a hubbub of drum and cornet, and another body of curiously attired men comes along. These are the military, a burlesque on the Indian soldiers that assume to defend this peaceful country. They are dressed in uniform, — Mexican uniform: white pants and shirt, the latter outside and overshadowing the former, — and some of them drag along a wooden cannon.

Another crowd rushes around the corner, bearing a different flag. These are Cubans, and a fight is at once in progress, a sham fight, in which no blood is shed, but many prisoners are taken. The Cubans are routed, of course, and pursued down the street with great pretended slaughter. The Yucatecos return with several prisoners, and at once institute a mock trial, the prisoners, three in number, being chained with strings of spools to the cannon. The captain asks the corporal of the guard where he found these men, and is told that he found them in the country; that they had no arms, so his men surrounded and took them prisoners.

“Did you not find any other prisoners?”

“*Sí, Señor Capitan, a jug of aguardiente.*”

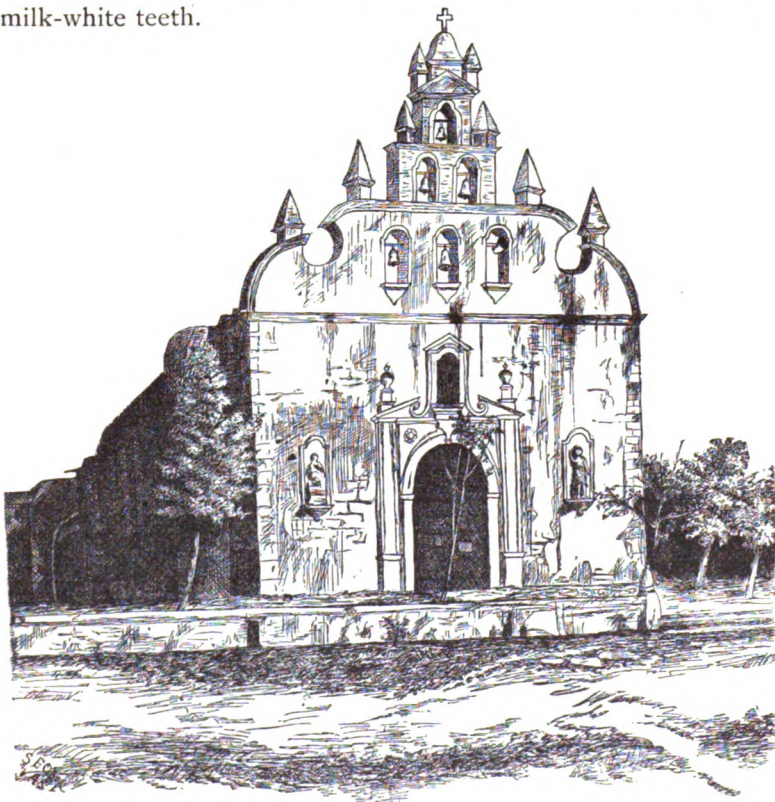
“And where is it?”

“The prisoners drank it.”

“Then take them out to be shot.”

A detachment marched off with the prisoners, and the ragged brigade went off in search of more glory. In the afternoon, at five, was the great *paseo*, when everybody who could hire a carriage joined in the procession that drove through the principal streets. Not all the carriages were elegant, being, most of them, of the country; but on this account they were all the more

interesting, especially the *calezas*, — two-wheeled vehicles, built somewhat after the pattern of the Cuban *volante*. These *calezas*, each drawn by a single horse or mule, on whose back was perched the driver, contained some of the prettiest girls in Merida, dark-skinned as a rule, but with beautiful black hair and eyes, and milk-white teeth.



THE CHURCH OF SANTIAGO.

The group at the consulate could not resist joining in the procession, and a *caleza* was obtained at once. The prescribed route, from which no one ever varied, was around the Plaza and through the two principal streets. At the corner of one is the famous nunnery, built many years ago, now partially in ruins, since the banishment of the fair inmates. It is said that there exists a



secret tunnel leading under the city from the monastery (now likewise in ruins) to this abode of peace and purity. The starting-place for the grand *paseo* is at the square of Santiago, where is a most holy church, in front of which is a great ceiba tree, the centre of the bull-ring. It is one of the oldest in the city, its façade is adorned with numerous statues, and its cupola with many bells. In the opinion of the early builders of churches, the sanctuary that could crowd the most bells into its turrets, and raise the loudest clangor, possessed the strongest odor of sanctity.

Every time you pass acquaintances, it is considered proper to salute them. The ladies do this sort of thing very gracefully, but at the same time in such a way that you are puzzled to know whether they are merely giving you recognition or beckoning to you. They raise the hand till the tips of the fingers are on a level with their eyes, then they flutter them backwards and forwards, seeming to invite approach rather than to give an ordinary salutation; and their bright, beaming eyes add to the illusion.

The most interesting feature of the day was a group of Indians representing the costumes and dances of the aborigines. The people found in possession of Yucatan, who fought the early Spaniards and were finally subjugated by them, who probably built the cities that have been nothing but ruins for centuries, were the Mayas (pronounced Mý-yahs), and were sun-worshippers. It has been stated that no traditions regarding them exist among the present inhabitants of Yucatan. The dance that I witnessed at the carnival completely refuted this, as will now appear. The first thing these Indians did was to spread a banner in the centre of the room, on which was painted a figure of the sun, with two people kneeling in adoration of that luminary. The chief of this band of about twenty Indians then suspended from his neck a bright-colored representation of the sun stamped on tin. At the foot of the banner-staff crouched an old man, with a drum made by stretching the skin of a calf or goat over one end of a hollow log. At the side of the drum hung a shell of a land tortoise, and the old man beat the drum and rattled the shell in

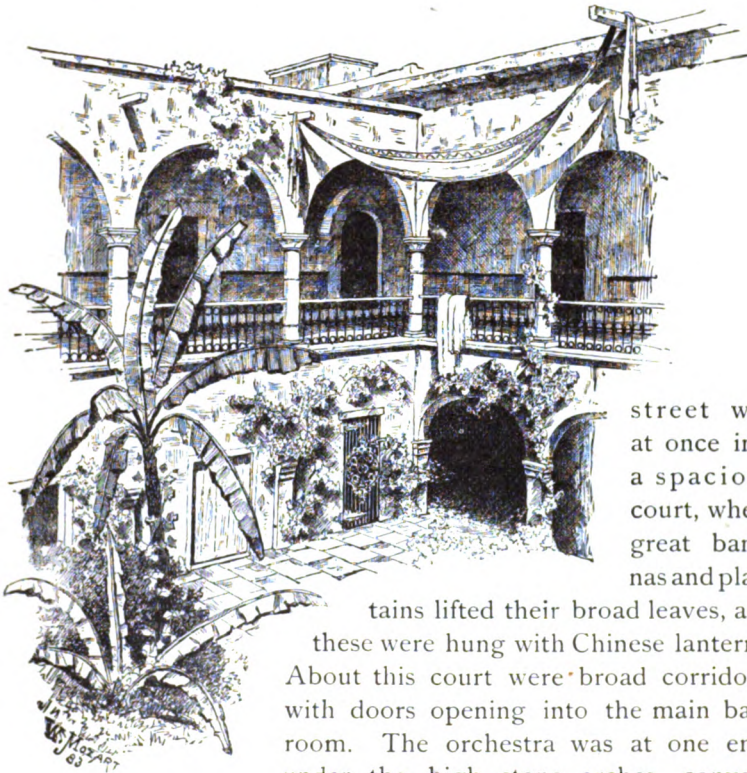
unison. The object with which he beat the drum attracted my attention, and I examined it and found it to be the gilded horn of a deer. This hollow drum, with turtle-shell and deer's antler, fully confirms the statement that the music is aboriginal; for one of the old chroniclers, in an account of a terrible battle with the Indians of Campeche, — writing not long after the event, — says that they made a most horrible and deafening noise with these instruments: "They had flutes and large sea-shells for trumpets, and turtle-shells, which they struck with deers' horns."

After the banner was spread, the band ran around it in a crouching attitude; in one hand each held a rattle, and in the other a fan of turkey feathers, with a handle formed by the foot and claw of the bird. Each one wore a wire mask, with a handkerchief over his head, and a mantle embroidered with figures of animals and hung with small sea-shells. The costume was that of the Mestiza women, — a skirt from the waist to the ankles, with their peculiar dress over it, — just such a one as was worn by their ancestors centuries ago, and by the ancient Egyptians. On their feet they wore sandals, tied on with hempen rope. The chief was distinguished by a high crown of peacock feathers. He chanted something in the Maya language, and they replied; and then the music struck up a weird strain and they danced furiously, assuming ludicrous postures, yet all having seeming significance, shaking their rattles and fans to right and left, and all keeping perfect time. After nearly half an hour of dancing they stopped, at a signal from the chief, and gathered about the banner, gazing upon the image of the sun with looks of adoration.

This was the dance of sorrow, or supplication; after it came the dance of joy, an Indian fandango; then the flag was furled, and the floor occupied by two couples. After this dance was finished they all adjourned to the court-yard, where the Consul had provided a large jug of *aguardiente*. Of this they imbibed through small tubes of the size of a pipe-stem, which all carried. These people kept this thing up four days and nights, dancing and drinking all day, yet not one seemed weary and not one was drunk. At dark they took their leave, politely thanking us

for our attention, and we soon heard them dancing and drumming in another house near us.

Those moving in the higher circles of society took their enjoyment at night in dancing, and there were two grand balls in progress at once. The entrance into the club-room from the

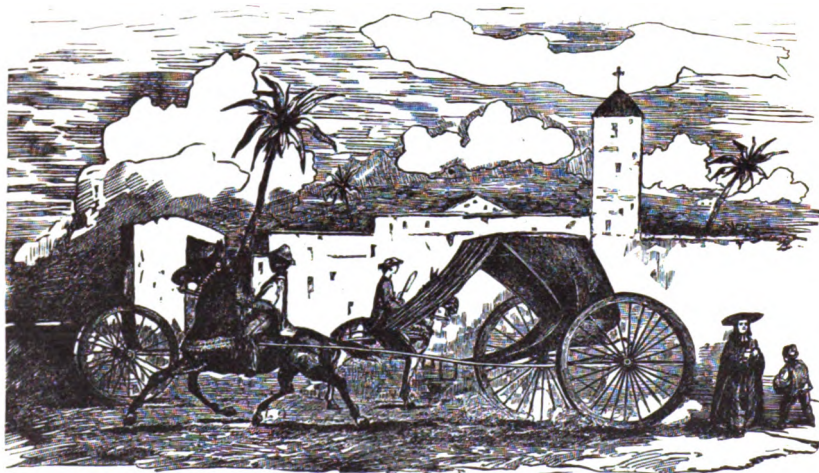


A COURT.

street was at once into a spacious court, where great bananas and plan-

tains lifted their broad leaves, and these were hung with Chinese lanterns. About this court were broad corridors, with doors opening into the main ball-room. The orchestra was at one end, under the high stone arches, conveniently near to the bar. As the ladies entered, they were escorted to seats in the main saloon, a long and high, though narrow room, where they sat ranged on both sides. They wore every variety of dress, from silk to calico, and, while some of the costumes were gorgeous, the majority were neat, fresh, and tasteful. The faces of the young ladies were sweet, pensive, and very pretty; the blooming complexions, though perhaps short-lived, soft and mellow-tinted.

The prevailing characteristics, glancing down the line of beauties, are large, black, liquid eyes, bright brunette skins, and abundant black hair. Notwithstanding a prevailing belief to the contrary, I think the girls of tropical climates fully as modest in their appearance as their Northern sisters. Their training in seclusion has not counted for nothing. Whatever their inmost desires may be, outwardly they are as pure as the firmest Quaker. They look at the young men demurely, but if gazed at they drop their eyes, yet not without showing the delight



YUCATECAN CALEZA.

CUBAN VOLANTE.

a young man's presence causes them. Yet their nature is not intense, but warm and indolent.

Everything here is for the enjoyment of the men,—the parks, the promenades, the drives, the cafés, the social life. Poor woman is looked upon merely as the Turk regards his mistress,—as an object to be kept jealously out of sight of the stranger, as a toy for the moment's enjoyment. That she rebels and repines at her harsh treatment is evident to the observer. But heartily do they enjoy the exquisite pleasures of the carnival. Here they can meet their lovers, and most zealously do they improve the fleeting hours in the ball-room. It is said

that all the engagements are made at this season, and the poor lovers have little chance for meeting again, before another carnival, except in the watchful presence of the lady's mother. They yield themselves to the sweet abandon of the hour, and float through the dances; but they quake inwardly at the thought of the scoldings they will get from the lynx-eyed duennas, who — now old and ugly — enviously begrudge their daughters these little pleasures.

No people in the world are pleasanter, or possessed of more delightful manners, than the Yucatecos, and they might be taken as models to be studied with advantage. The Yucatan dance is slow and measured, simply a walk-around, and so no one gets warm and perspiring. Dance follows dance, until twelve o'clock, when the ladies begin to lessen in number, and by one the hall is empty.

Five nights they kept the ball in motion, improving every precious hour of the carnival; and at its ending there were, doubtless, many souls made happy with the thought that they twain should some time be one; while a great many more were disappointed, and were relegated to another year's imprisonment.

To the great regret of the people, the carnival finally ended, the noise of revelry ceased, all the fair *señoritas* were safely housed in their respective prisons, the lights of the ball-room extinguished; and we walked home to our hammocks beneath the glimmer of the serenest of stars, and through an atmosphere delicious in its coolness.

### III.

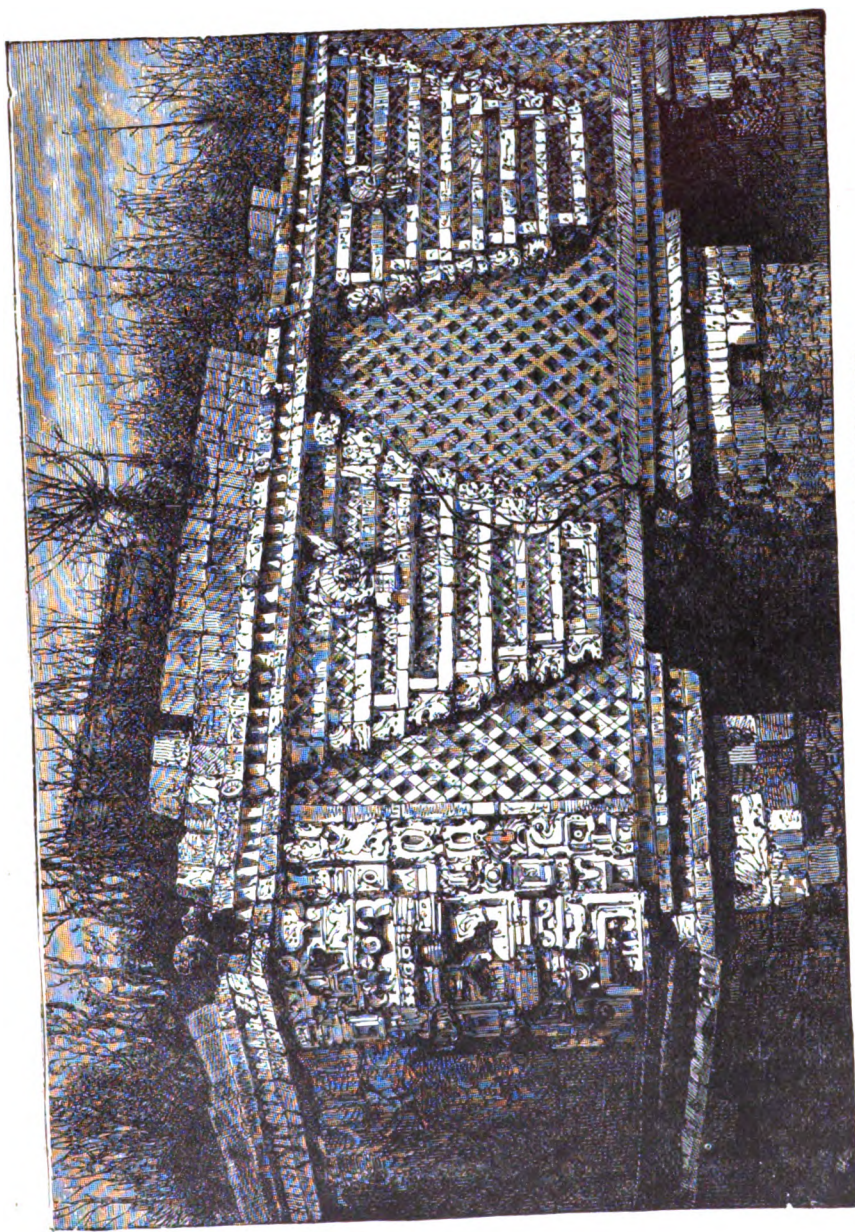
#### UXMAL, THE RUINED CITY.

BURIED in the wildernesses of Yucatan, ruined cities await in silence the coming of the traveller, — cities that had their birth so far back in the twilight of time that not a tradition even remains to tell who built them. Within a radius of one hundred miles from Merida are such magnificent ruins as Mayapan, Aké, Chichen-Itza, Kabah, and Labná, and scores of others. But none is more interesting than UXMAL, which is also very accessible, being within forty miles of the capital, in a straight line, and sixty miles by road. At four o'clock in the morning after the last ball of the carnival, the Consul woke me. He had just returned from the scene of revelry and yet wore his official uniform; but in half an hour he had exchanged this for a plainer garb, had packed a small valise with articles for a trip, and was ready for an excursion to Uxmal. The morning was very cold, the stars were still shining brightly, while the Great Bear was crouched away west of the north star, hanging above it with his tail in the air.

The *volan* came at five, the driver tied valises and gun-cases to the axle, and we crawled in and lay down on the mattress. Early as it was, there was some life astir, — men wrapped in their *sarapes*, and a cart with women from the country. We cleared the city limits before daybreak, passing through the gate of San Cristobal, meeting many teams, loaded with wood and hemp, with people perched on top under little shelter, all shivering with the cold.

Travelling in Yucatan is attended with some difficulties, owing to the heat of day and the bad state of the roads. To avoid the heat, all long journeys are performed by night. To





PORTION OF FACADE OF CASA DEL GOBERNADOR.





mitigate the roughness of the road, a peculiar style of vehicle is employed, called a *volan*. This is a Yucatecan conveyance *sui generis*, and not found anywhere else; it might be called a modified volante, — in common use in Cuba, — only, instead of sitting up in it, you lie down. It has two large wheels, and the body of the concern is placed directly above the axle, suspended upon high, very elastic springs. The shafts are very long, and a framework projects behind, upon which trunks may be secured, and a bottom of interlaced ropes supports a mattress. It has a canvas top, and is always drawn by three mules, — one in the shafts and one on either side, — harnessed in by such a combination of leather and rope that no stranger could, by any possibility, disentangle them. These mules are generally very small, but make up for lack of size by the length of their ears, which they carry along their backs.

The sun came up; the western sky was reddened and the fine leaves of the mimosas were gilded by its first rays. The many birds that live in the scrub then came out: blackbirds, "chick-bulls" or *Crotophaga*, jays, orioles, and at one place we passed the fresh skeleton of an ox covered with vultures, the species common in the Southern United States and the West Indies, — *Cathartes aura* and *atratus*. At nine o'clock, having accomplished two fifths of the journey, we came in sight of the hacienda of Uayalké. We entered the great gate, and our driver stopped under a large tree in front of the house, and unhitched the mules, as though all belonged to us. This is one of the delights of travel in Yucatan: that any *hacendado*, or owner of a hacienda, makes you welcome to his hospitality; there being no hotels in the country, this has become a necessity, to which they gracefully submit. We ascended the steps and were greeted by the *mayor-domo*, who showed us all over the house and ordered breakfast at once, — a charming repast, of tortillas, frijoles, eggs, oranges, and chocolate, with a jar of water in common.

This hacienda is a very large one, having thousands of acres planted in hemp, with great engines busily at work crushing the leaves and rasping the pulp. Great stone corridors sur-

round the house, and a broad *alameda*, or shaded walk, extends out to the gardens, passing above the stables. Here a score or more of women were drawing water from two deep wells, reaching a *cenote* by an endless chain of bark buckets running over a large wheel. They were going and coming in endless procession, with large *cantaros*, or jars, upon their hips. This water serves to irrigate the garden, full of orange trees, coffee, and coco palms. Without it, the plain about would be a waste; with it, it blossomed like an oasis, as it was. The lime-rock crops up everywhere, and about the orange trees brick walls have been built to retain the water. Everywhere are high stone and arched gateways, and away on every side stretch broad fields of hemp. Everybody seemed cheerful, busy, and modest. After we were made welcome the head servants came up and saluted each of us, "*Buenos días, señor!*" and about twenty savage-looking fellows, who came in with huge bales of grass strapped to their heads, and with long *machetes* hanging at their sides, left their loads and bade us good morning, bowing to us gracefully. There was a clock-tower here, and a chapel with figures in stone over the door; a fountain stood in the centre of the yard, and orange trees in bloom, full of doves and warblers, shaded the corridor. Outside the hacienda walls lay scattered curious elliptical huts, with stone walls and thatched roofs, the homes of the laborers.

An hour after leaving this hacienda we reached that of Mucuyché, famous for its *cenote*, or water-cave. There are no rivers in Yucatan that flow above ground, and the people are wholly dependent upon the clouds for their supply of water, and upon the rivers that run beneath the surface. The whole province is one vast table of coral rock, beneath which flow large streams, and even rivers. These break out at intervals into caves and caverns, formed by earthquake and the pressure of the water, though sometimes the supply is due to the infiltration of surface water into natural grottos in the coral rock. The Indians, centuries ago, marked the courses of these subterranean streams by heaps of stones, and their cities were always built near or about the water-caves, as is now shown by

their ruins. These caves, where the rivers appear to the light of day, are called *cenotes*. There are many in Yucatan, and in Merida are several, utilized as bathing-places, — most refreshing resorts in the heat of day. The cenote at Mucuyché is a cavern, perhaps forty feet deep, broken down at one side, forming an arch of limestone with every shape of stalagmite and stalactite, the roof full of holes, in which were the nests of hundreds of swallows and hornets. A flight of stone steps leads from the delightful garden above, and some avocado pears and coco palms growing at the bottom thrust their crowns above the general level of the ground. The water is clear and very deep at the east end of the cave, with many fish in it, — “cenote fish,” — which are said to be blind, like those in the Mammoth Cave. Roots of trees hang pendent in clusters, behind which lizards and iguanas dart along the ledges; swallows circle in dense masses about the arch, forming a complete ring, and making a deafening whirring noise with their wings. The way to the cave was past the great front corridor above the cattle-yard, — all cattle-yards of Yucatan are in front of, and immediately adjoining, the dwellings of the proprietors, — past the well, where pretty mestizas were drawing water, and through a garden full of orange and lemon trees.

Our delays made our driver impatient, and he plied the lash upon those unhappy mules more furiously, if possible, than before, urging them with his tongue, likewise, by shouting, “*Mula! Mula!*” and clucking so strongly with his lips that I thought some of the braces had cracked, and looked out. The cart was banged over rocks and into holes, the mules going at a full trot, and on level road at a gallop, and our half-reclining position was anything but pleasant.

The vegetation hitherto had been the same, low trees and bushes, but the mimosas grew taller as we went on. At one point on the road we stopped to examine an Indian mound, and found broken sculptures and blocks of limestone scattered about through the bushes, indicating that we were in the field of ruins to which appertained the great dead city. From its summit we looked over a wide extent of plain, flat as a table, with only

now and then a large tree and with a single line of hills, blue in the distance, ten miles beyond which was our destination.

In descending, we found ourselves covered with *garrapatas*, or ticks, with which the entire territory of Yucatan abounds. These insects are very small, but also very annoying, for no one can venture into a wood without being covered with them, and they cause a dreadful itching, festering in the wounds. The only protection from them that I am aware of is petroleum, with which the entire body must be rubbed, and the clothes must be changed when coming from the fields. Emerging from the miles of woods, we saw a hemp-field, and soon the white gate of a hacienda, — a beautiful place, — which we reached at four in the afternoon. We intended to go on, but the mayor-domo pressed us to stay, and gave us a splendid supper of turtle-soup and steak, eggs, frijoles, and tortillas, with claret and honey. A garden, every way the equal of that we had visited in the morning, surrounded the house, and we walked in its delightful shades in the evening. The beehives attracted my attention, they were so primitive and so complete, for a tropical country, being merely round hollow logs, about two feet long, plastered up at each end with mud, and piled up in long rows. They are emptied every six weeks. The honey is so fragrant at some seasons as to scent the house; and there is an added charm to bee-keeping in this country from the fact that the bees are stingless. At sunset the chapel bell sounded for *oracion*, or evening prayer, and all the laborers gathered about with uncovered heads. When it was finished, they came to us and wished us "*Buenas noches*" (good night). This delightful custom is in vogue in every portion of the country; in Merida, the servants and children never failed to give us this salutation of peace, as the last stroke of the bell died on the air.

That evening, in March, 1881, was a glorious one, with a new moon, and Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn forming a triangle above her. We slept in hammocks in the corridor, and at four next morning were out in search of José, our driver; at six, after waiting a long time for chocolate, we left the hospitable mayor-domo, who was complaining of having been kept up after his

usual hour of retiring, eight o'clock, by some of his people who had been off at a *fiesta*. The hacienda of San José is near the Sierra, the only line of hills in Yucatan, and here called mountains. These we climbed easily, sitting in the front of the volan, to avoid tipping up the mules, and descended the other slope before the sun got hot. The driver urged the mules down hill at a furious pace, lashing them all the way, over steep, slippery



CORRIDOR OF HACIENDA.

rocks, and along the borders of high cliffs, but when we reached level going he pulled them up! We had been going about two hours, when we saw José pull out a long black cigar and light it. By this sign we knew we were near a town or hacienda, this being an invariable custom, as no high-bred driver will appear in any village or plantation without a lighted cigar in his mouth and driving like mad. Sure enough, the hemp-fields soon hove

in sight, and then the hacienda, into the yard of which we rode wildly, took out the mules, and carried our traps to the corridor,— and then asked permission to stop there. The proprietor was there, by some good fortune, and gave us the best he had at once. Hammocks were assigned us in a large room, our mules were stabled, and we were invited to partake of the hospitality of the hacienda for the week that we intended to stay there. It was a mile to the ruins, portions of which we found imbedded in the walls of the buildings and the fences. At the right hand of the corridor was the veritable “two-headed tiger” discovered and unearthed by Stephens, forty years ago, at the palace of Uxmal, and brought here by the present proprietor for safe-keeping; and a heap of small idols lay at the foot of a palm tree growing near it.

So much did the proprietor of Uxmal facilitate our preparations, that at ten o'clock we had traversed the intervening space between the hacienda and the ruins, and were at the base of the great pyramid. I do not know whether a writer ought to describe his sensations, or merely what he sees, leaving it for the reader to imagine what he would have thought and felt had he been there; but it may not be out of place to say that I was elated at the prospect of looking for the first time upon these magnificent ruins, and that a variety of emotions kept me in a state of expectation and pleasurable excitement. We climbed up the steep sides of the pyramid, generally known as the *Casa del Adivino*,<sup>1</sup> or “House of the Prophet,” and from its summit, from the roof of its topmost building,— difficult to reach and offering precarious foothold,— a glorious panorama was spread before us.

West, directly below, was the *Casa de las Monjas*, or “House of the Nuns,” in its ruins beautiful beyond description; south, the principal building of the group, the “House of the Governor,”

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “House of the Soothsayer,” or “Diviner,” but called “House of the Dwarf,” from a fanciful legend, related by the natives, that it was built by a savage dwarf in a single night. The names of all the buildings are misnomers, their original ones (if they had any) having been forgotten, and replaced by comparatively modern appellations by the Spanish invaders.

or *Casa del Gobernador*, raised upon its immense terraces, one of which also supported the "House of the Turtles" (*Casa de las Tortugas*), with the "Nameless Mound" beyond them all; east of south lay the ruins of *Casa de la Vieja* (the "Old Woman's House"), all tumbled about her head; from south to west circled mounds and clusters of ruins, such as the "House of the Pigeons" (*Casa de las Palomas*), and the remains of an extensive series of buildings; beyond this city could be seen other ruins, perhaps other cities, reaching out in a long line that could be traced miles away.

"The dense wild wood that hid the royal seat,  
The lofty palms that choked the winding street,  
Man's hand hath felled, and now, in day's fair light,  
Uxmal's broad ruins burst upon the sight."

A great plain surrounded us, smooth and level as the sea, with a range of hills circling from northwest to southeast. This mound, or pyramid, lying due east from the city, was probably used as a place of sacrifice. The rooms of the building that forms the apex of the structure are small, and with the peculiar arch without the keystone, the entire building being about seventy feet long and only twelve feet deep. It is rich in sculpture; the hieroglyphics on the western part are in a good state of preservation, and a certain archæologist claims to have the key to their meaning. The entire pyramid<sup>1</sup> is one hundred and five feet high, "not exactly pyramidal," but with rounded sides. A staircase, seventy feet wide, one hundred and two feet high, and containing ninety steps, climbs the eastern face of the structure from the base to the platform. The steps are narrow and steep, and we can well believe that when, as the old historians relate, the high priest kicked the body of the victim of sacrifice from the house of the altar, it fell the whole distance of a hundred feet to the ground, — that "it never stopped till it came to the bottom." We had much difficulty in getting up,

<sup>1</sup> Norman, who visited Yucatan between the two visits of Stephens, — 1840 and 1842, — varies slightly in his measurements from the latter author, whose descriptions I follow in the main; but his examination was a hasty one, and where there is a difference, it will be safer to accept the data furnished by Stephens.

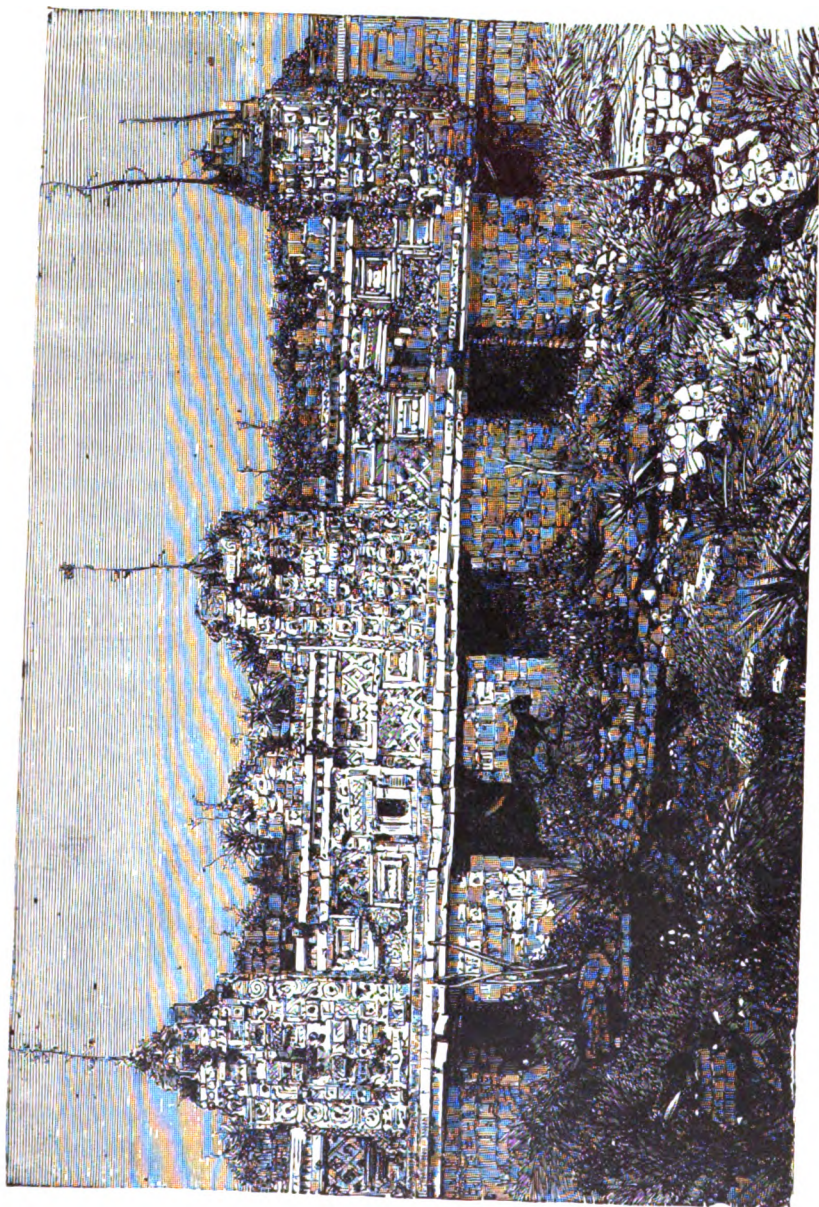
and a great deal more in getting down, where a single false step would have precipitated us headlong. Waldeck<sup>1</sup> considers this a place originally devoted to sacrifices, and says the "Asiatic style" is easily recognized in the architecture of this monument.

By far the finest building of the city, conspicuous alike from its position and the completeness of its preservation, is the "Royal Palace," the *Casa del Gobernador*. After the Conjuror's Pyramid, this was the next pile visited by us, and made the point of departure for subsequent excursions during the five days we remained there. It stands upon the topmost of three terraces of earth, — once perhaps faced with stone, but now crumbled and broken. The lowermost and largest is 575 feet long; the second, 545 feet long, 250 wide, and 25 feet high; while the third and last is 360 feet in length, 30 in breadth, and 19 in height, and supports the building, which has a front of 322 feet, with a depth of only 39 and a height of but 25 feet. It is entirely of stone without ornament to a height of about ten feet, where there is a wide cornice, above which the wall is a bewildering maze of beautiful sculpture. The roof was flat and once covered with cement, in the opinion of certain travellers, but is now a miniature forest of the indigenous shrubs and small trees of Yucatan, — a hanging-garden of Nature's own formation, such as she covers every object with, in a few years, in this tropical portion of her domain. There are three large doorways through the eastern wall, about eight feet square, giving entrance into a series of apartments, the largest of which is sixty feet long and twenty-seven deep, divided into two rooms by a thick wall. The ceiling of each room is a triangular arch (such as is figured a little farther on), capped by flat blocks at a height of twenty-three feet above the floor. The latter, like the walls and the jambs of the doorways, is of smooth, faced stones, that may once have been covered with cement.

It is impossible to convey in mere words a picture, either in general or in detail, of this beautiful building; and hence I supplement my meagre description with engravings which I have procured, knowing that they will speak more eloquently than

<sup>1</sup> *Voyage Pittoresque et Archéologique dans la Province de Yucatan*, Paris, 1838.





NORTH FACADE OF CASA DE LAS MONJAS.



the pen. In them, the intricate details of the sculpture, that baffled even the pencil of the accomplished Catherwood, are presented clearly at a glance.

Within a stone's throw of the "Governor's Palace" is a small building far gone in ruins, displaying workmanship of great skill, and sculpture chaste in design, called the "House of the Turtles," — *Casa de las Tortugas*. It derives its name from a row of turtles used as ornaments to the upper cornice. It may have served as the kitchen to the royal residence, — accepting Indian tradition in regard to the names, — but was once beautiful enough for a temple.

If the "Governor's House" claims attention from its conspicuous position and size, the *Casa de las Monjas*, the so-called "House of the Nuns," presents the greatest variety of sculptured forms and richest ornaments. It is composed of four buildings, the longest of which is 279 feet and about equal in height to the palace, enclosing a court 258 feet long and 214 wide. The entrance is on the southern side, through a high arched gateway ten feet wide. There are no doors or windows opening on the outside, though there are in all *eighty-eight* apartments opening upon the court.

The façades of this immense quadrangle are ornamented, says Stephens,<sup>1</sup> with the richest and most intricate carving known in the art of the builders of Uxmal. That portion forming the western boundary, at the left as one enters the court, is the most wonderful of all; for its entire length of 173 feet is covered by two colossal serpents, whose intertwined bodies enclose a puzzling variety of sculptured hieroglyphs. Theory and speculation do not enter into the plan of this work, or I should venture a few remarks upon the personage or deity this great serpent is intended to represent. We shall see later on, in Mex-

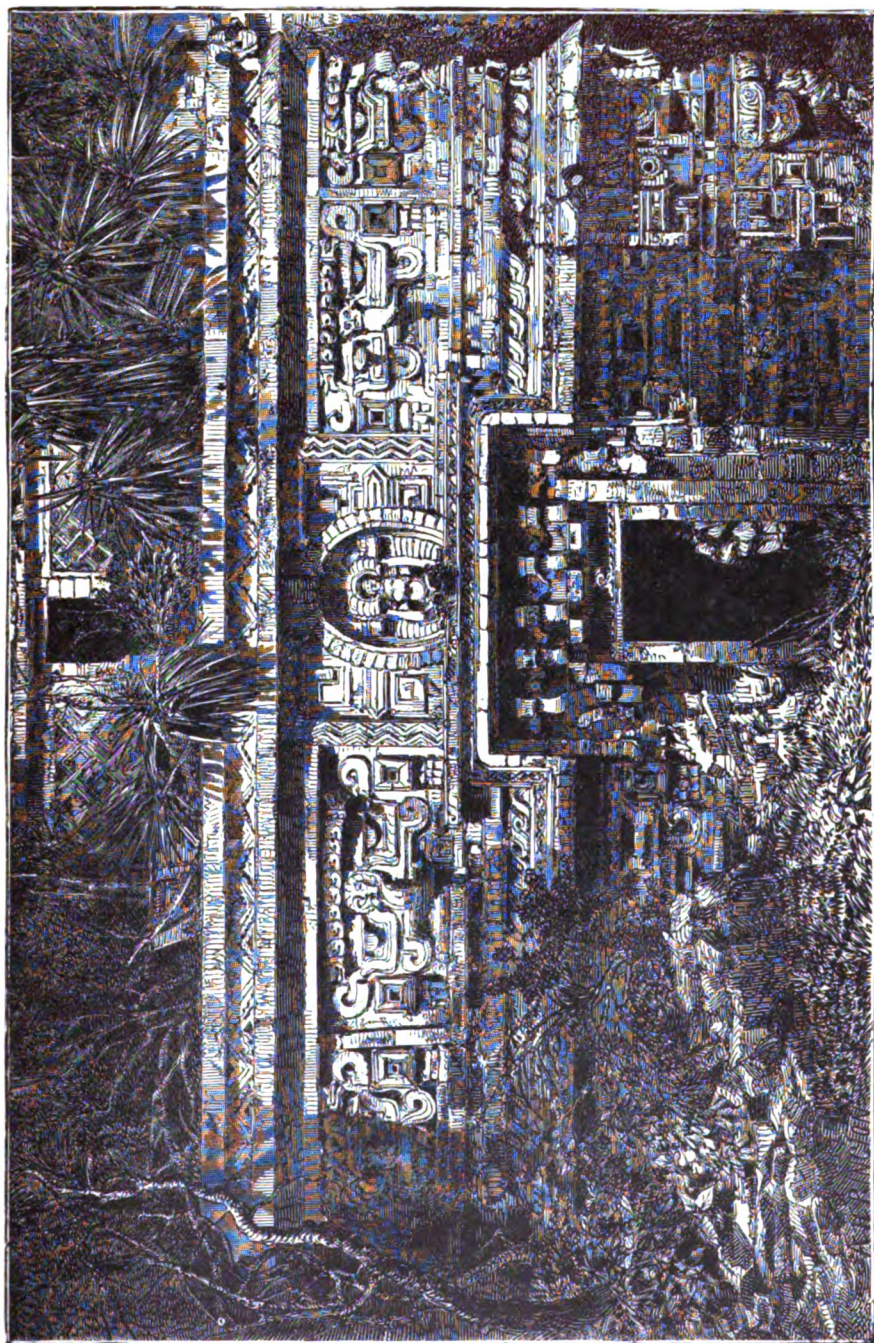
<sup>1</sup> This traveller, accompanied by the talented Catherwood, visited and described the most important ruins of Honduras, Guatemala, Chiapas, and Yucatan, and his works, "Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan," and "Incidents of Travel in Yucatan," have been accepted as standard authorities upon them. We can hardly travel there without treading in his footsteps, and hence I have used his measurements of buildings, and can vouch for the accuracy of his descriptions.

ico, the same feathered or plumed serpent, and cannot help recalling the Aztec tradition regarding it. In another decade of years it is possible that this grand conception embodied in stone by the Indian sculptors will be mutilated beyond repair, as a great portion of the wall has already been torn away for building purposes. Yuccas and other semi-tropical plants adorn the roof of this building, and also the ground in front, rendering approach to it somewhat difficult. At the southern end of the court the folds of the serpents surround a standing human figure, now much mutilated, a subject rarely used in the ornamentation of these buildings. If the drawing by Catherwood, made forty years ago, is correct, all the faced stone below the figure has been torn away since he was there. The northern and eastern façades have been greatly injured since Stephens's visit, and most of the grotesque ornaments, the rosettes and heads, broken or wrenched entirely away. The hand of man proves more ruthless than the hand of time; and, since the exportation of antiquities has been forbidden by the Mexican government, it is evident that these stones have been removed by the proprietors of Uxmal, or the laborers, for use in their dwellings.

These three structures comprise the principal buildings at present in a state of preservation that makes them of interest to the general traveller. There are others, even in this group, as mentioned in the view from the high mound, but they are in such a state of ruin that their original form is obliterated.

South from Uxmal are the extensive ruins of Kabah, where are buildings with fronts of one hundred and fifty feet, and lavishly ornamented. Unlike the façades of the buildings of Uxmal, which were only decorated above the doorways, those of Kabah were "ornamented from their very foundation." Stephens also adds: "The cornice running over the doorways, tried by the severest rules of art recognized among us, would embellish the art of any known era; and, amid a mass of barbarism, of rude and uncouth conceptions, it stands as an offering by American builders worthy of the acceptance of a polished people." At Labná the sculpture is profuse, grotesque, and





HUMAN FIGURE. CASA DE LAS MONTAÑAS.



florid. Of the sixty or seventy ruined cities scattered throughout Yucatan, none offers points of greater interest than Uxmal. The ruins of Copan, in Honduras, are distinguished for the number of idols and altars richly sculptured; those of Palenque, in the State of Chiapas, for the profusion of stucco adornment, tablets, bas-reliefs, and statuary; Uxmal, for the richness of its sculptured façades, the magnitude of its buildings, and the chasteness and beauty of its statuary, judging from the few specimens found there. There was recently discovered at Uxmal, by the archæologist, Dr. Le Plongeon, in the summer of 1881, a beautiful statue, surpassing anything ever found among the ruins of Central America. Fearing that, if made known to the government, it would share the fate of his other discovery at Chichen, that of Chaacmol, he closed the aperture leading to it; and this fair conception of Indian art was again consigned to the darkness in which it has rested for centuries.

Who are the people who built these structures, who lavished the work of a lifetime upon their adornment, and who have passed away without leaving a memorial (except in undeciphered hieroglyphs) of their existence? Various are the theories propounded, and presumptuous would he be who would now offer one differing from those of the learned men,—who all differ among themselves! Writers seeking to find in the Bible the root of the tree of the human family have ascribed these buildings to the Jews, to the Phœnicians, and to the Egyptians. Some assign to them a great antiquity, others claim that they are of comparatively recent construction. Among the latter is Stephens, who says, "They were not the work of people who have passed away and whose history is lost, but of the same race who inhabited the country at the time of the Spanish conquest, or of some not very distant progenitors." Yet he admits that there are no traditions, (as there should be if his supposition were correct,) as in the case of Egypt, Greece, and Rome; and this, with many other facts, is in support of the theories of Dr. Le Plongeon and other hardy thinkers of later date than Stephens, who do not fear to deliver their unshackled opinions. The above-quoted writer also thought that perhaps the Toltecs,

when they left Anahuac, came here, some of them, and built these cities; yet again he says, "They claim no affinity with the works of any known people, but a distinct, independent, and separate existence." (!)

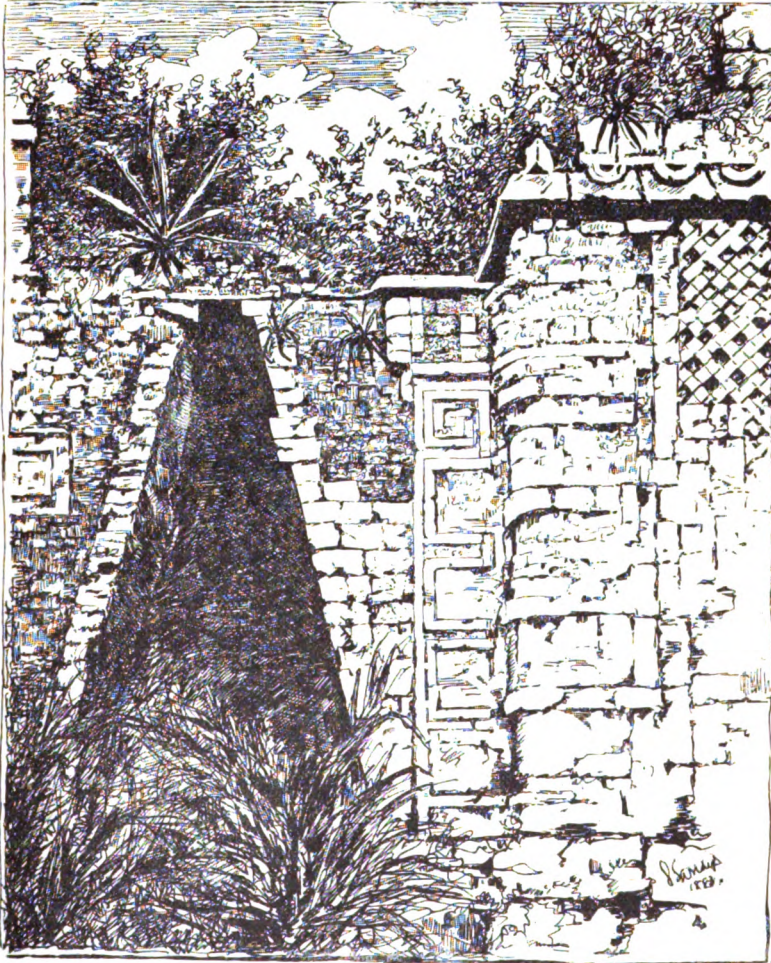
It will not be permitted for men chained to any particular creed, who would fain be the Champollions of the New World, to decipher the inscriptions on the walls of these cities. We have seen enough of this kind in the work of the Spanish ecclesiastics, who perverted history that Indian traditions might conform to the views of priests and monks squinting through Papal spectacles. They do not take into account the cumulative evidence in favor of an *original American civilization*, but crawl about, groping for some clue that shall lead up to Shem, Ham, and Japhet!

Many blunders have been committed by writers reasoning from false premises; but the most amusing, perhaps, is one by Prescott, who, unfortunately, obliged to avail himself solely of the researches of others, was led frequently into blind alleys and byways. In writing of the ruins of Uxmal he says, "Another evidence of their age is afforded by the circumstance that in one of the courts of Uxmal the granite (?) pavement, on which the figures of tortoises were raised in relief, is worn nearly smooth by the feet of the crowds who have passed over it; a curious fact, suggesting inferences both in regard to the age and population of the place." Now this "granite pavement," with its carven tortoises, has never been seen by mortal man, although described by the unreliable and wonder-seeking Waldeck. The native historian of Yucatan, Señor Ancona, calls attention to this fact, and declares that we are wholly indebted to the imagination of Waldeck for this statement: "*Estas tortugas, expuestas a las piedras de la muchedumbre, solo han existido en la imaginacion de Waldeck.*" It is true that there are many sculptures of this kind in Uxmal, but only on the doors and on the cornices.

The Consul and myself fixed our residence in the *Casa del Gobernador*, in the inner room of the great apartment. Some beams had once crossed the room, at ten feet or so above the



stone floor, but they had fallen out centuries ago, leaving only the sockets. Into two of these we fitted the ends of a small sapling, which our Indian cut, and crossed the space twenty



THE MAYA ARCH.

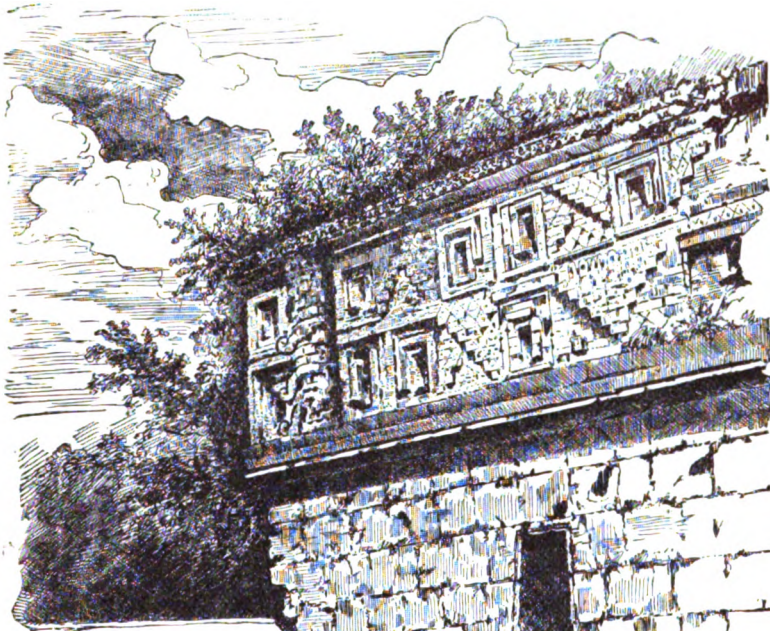
feet beyond with another, and in this manner secured a hanging-place for our hammocks. The generous proprietor of the

hacienda had furnished us with an Indian, a pure Maya, descended, perhaps, from the very builders of this palace, who spoke only his native tongue. By signs, and with a few Maya sentences the Consul understood, we managed him very well. He cleared away the trees and bushes about the walls, so that I could photograph them, made our fires night and morning, carried our apparatus, and made himself much beloved.

Though we passed several days here, we had few adventures, and one will suffice to illustrate how we passed the time in the palace of the departed kings. In the morning we went out to the *aguada*, or watering-place, of the ancient city, a small pond that may originally have been artificial, but which bears no evidence of it now, being surrounded with sedges and water plants, and with little islets in it, harbors of refuge for numerous coots and gallinules. I shot one of these latter birds, with long, slender toes, and strong spurs on its wings, and also some beautiful yellow-breasted specimens of *tyrannus* and crimson fly-catchers. From the *aguada*, toward which the surrounding plain sloped naturally, covered with a thick growth of low trees, a perfect view was spread out of the entire city, its rear portion showing what a stupendous monument the giants of those dead and gone days had erected. More ponds were scattered about here, some shaded by trees, and all welcome as rare sights to greet the eyes of one travelling in Eastern Yucatan.

In crossing a grassy pasture lying in the great quadrangle between the buildings, I astonished our Indian guide beyond measure by shooting a king vulture, as it flew overhead. I was attempting to creep upon it, when it flew; the Indian, who thought then that I had lost all chance of shooting it, was rooted to the spot when he saw it fall hurtling through the air, and strike the earth at the base of a prostrate pillar of sculptured stone. He recovered himself in season to bring me the bird, but examined us both attentively; and when he later explained, in his guttural language, the whole thing to a group of friends, they all regarded me with increased respect.

The heat of noon was very oppressive, and we passed that period in the corridor of our house, admiring the prospect



"ELEPHANT TRUNKS."

spread before us from the open door. There is one feature about the Yucatan architecture that has caused almost as much wrangling among archæologists as the celebrated "calendar stone," and that is the "Maya arch," made without a keystone. By producing a photographic reproduction of that in the southern end of the eastern façade, my readers will see at once its shape, its symmetry, and the method of formation. Arches exist in all the ruins, notably one figured by Stephens at Kabah, which, standing solitary in its massiveness, reminded him of the Arch of Titus. Another peculiarity of the sculptor's art, also, is the so-called "elephant trunk," shown in the photograph of

the northwest corner of the palace. Waldeck gives it this name, and Stephens, commenting on this, wonders where the early architects obtained their pattern, since the elephant is not indigenous to America. But the *mastodon* was; though this item in support of the theory of great antiquity is not relished by the seekers after a connecting link with the Old World.

As night came along, away went our faithful Maya, his love for us not proving strong enough to induce him to remain in the ruins after dark. He was perfectly right, for he could quote Indian tradition to the effect that the builders and former occupants return at night and seize upon any of their kind found within the castle walls. So the Consul and I were left alone, to brave the terrors of a night in the damp and lonely ruin. Just at sunset we climbed the immense pile known as the "Nameless Mound," and, scrambling over loose stones, amongst agave and prickly-pear, reached the top, a platform of rough rock, with many holes here and there, suggesting caverns of unknown depth. We found here shards of pottery, arched openings on the north side, and everywhere sculptured stones, in evidence that much labor had been expended here. From it one overlooks the entire city; and we saw the sun go down, gilding with his last rays the Diviner's House on the top of the great pyramid, and glancing over the walls of the "House of the Nuns," and the *Pajares*, or "House of Birds." We had seen him in the morning, shining full upon the eastern face of this "hill of sacrifice"; and now we attempted to people anew its deserted halls with some of the vast multitude that are said to have assembled before it when a victim was offered to their idols. Remains of their idol worship lie scattered about the courts and over the forest-covered plains, showing that they had a good variety of gods; but whether all at once, or in successive ages, who can tell?

We descended to our quarters in the *casa*, and, sticking a candle up in a bottle and lighting it, prepared for the night. Darkness completely enveloped us; the cries of the various birds, such as jays and *chachalakas*, had ceased; —



“ . . . the night-eyed insect tribes  
Waked to their portion of the circling hours ”;—

the stars came out and smiled down on us.

A flat stone, that had once formed a portion of the wall, served as a table, and stones for seats, that had been carved a thousand years ago with patient art. Soon the Consul left me to my enforced labor of skinning birds, and sought his hammock in the inner room, whither I did not follow him till well past midnight, sitting up purposely to tempt the ghosts and note the noises of the night. They have a charm for me, these nocturnal sounds, and many a tropic night I have lain awake, beneath rustling palms and waving plantain leaves, striving to analyze the myriad voices in the trees. But there were few here; man, beast, and bird seemed to have deserted the dead city, and to have left it to silence.

As I finally rose to retire, a noise like the distant roar of the sea came down to me, caused by the hundreds of bats and vampires swooping through the resounding arch above. Entering the inner doorway, with the flaring candle shaded by my hand, there stared me in the face the bloody imprint of the *red hand*, that mystery to antiquarians, and the yawning hole, dug by some vandal, to satisfy himself the walls were solid.

The rumors prevailing among the Indians that there were tigers lurking in these ruins, and that the *sublevados* sometimes extended their nocturnal raids as far as Uxmal, induced us to carry our fire-arms to bed with us, and each had a gun leaning against the wall within reach, and a revolver hanging at the head of the hammock.

It was not long after I had extinguished the candle, that I was dreaming of Indians, and their natural concomitants, murder and bloodshed. That red hand haunted me: an enormous savage stood by my hammock, with a hand dripping with blood which he was about to imprint on my face—when I awoke, and found it morning.

#### IV.

##### A NEW INDUSTRY AND AN OLD MONUMENT.

THE indigenous product of Yucatan is hemp; or, to begin the subject correctly, and with a due regard for botanical nomenclature and local appellation, this so-called "Sisal hemp" is not hemp at all, but *henequen*, the *Agave Sisalensis*. It has a true fibre, possessing such excellent qualities that the demand for it is greater than the supply. The chief excellence of the plant is, that it requires little soil to grow upon, and springs up everywhere from crevices in the great coral ledges that constitute the surface of the peninsula.

A great proportion of this territory is covered with dense scrub, composed of stunted trees and bushes matted together with thorny vines; beneath this scrub is the rock that even the vegetable mould of centuries but thinly covers, owing to the annual fires that run over the country. A portion of this scrub is cleared, — that is, the bushes and trees are cut down and left to dry for a season, — and the next year, if the previous one has been dry, fire is put to this clearing and the ground opened by the laborers, who dig holes in the rocky soil and set out the plants. Each clearing is divided into *mecates*, of about twenty-four metres square, and the plants are set out about eight feet apart each way, giving from eighty to one hundred plants to each *mecate*. The land is kept clean till the plants are well grown and they arrive at maturity, or at a point for profitable cutting, in from five to seven years, when the larger leaves are four or five feet in length. Each plant yields from twenty to thirty leaves annually, for a period of from twelve to fifteen, eighteen, or twenty years; about a third more in the rainy than in the dry season of the year. It is said to require from six

to eight thousand leaves to make a bale weighing four hundred pounds.

When arrived at sufficient size, the leaves are cut, commencing at the bottom, and from the field are carried to the "scraping-machine," which consists of a large fly-wheel, with strong, blunt knives, transversely attached to its periphery. Against these knives, carried around on the rapidly revolving wheel, the leaves are pressed, one by one, by means of a curved lever, in such a way that the pulpy portion is scraped off, leaving the fibre. The men (always Indians) feed the machine with astonishing rapidity, thrusting in first one end of the leaf, and then the other, and pressing it between the knives and lever by a motion of the leg. Among the poor people the leaves are scraped by hand; and these poor laborers work mostly at night, from evening until morning, because the heat of day causes the juice to ferment, and irritates the hands, while it also spoils the fibre. Four men are required to attend each machine, including those who bring the bundles of leaves and carry away the refuse pulp.

A good scraper will produce a bale of dried fibre per day, which comes from the machines in long strips, looking like green corn-silk, and is laid in bundles, then carried into the drying yard and hung over light poles placed on a framework about three feet from the ground. It soon dries, in a hot day in three or four hours, when it loses its greenish hue and appears white and glossy; it is then baled by means of hydraulic presses, each bale holding from 350 to 450 pounds. As must be apparent from a consideration of the ease with which this henequen is raised, from the fact that the plants can be obtained wild at little expense, and from another important fact, that little care is necessary for the plant after it once begins to yield, here is a culture that promises great returns for little outlay. Land is cheap, and, when it can be obtained at all, is bought by the square league. The principal cost is in clearing it, and for machinery; after that succeed only the ordinary expenses of carrying on a farm; — a farm where there is no laborious course of preparation each year for the planting of seed, no fatiguing hoeing of crops, no long season of winter to provide for; only

the cutting and harvesting of a spontaneous product, by means of laborers who receive such ridiculously small daily pay that it would not be accepted by a farm hand in the North for the work of an hour. Fortunes are made here in henequen, and the fortunate owners of haciendas live a life of luxury; they and their children travel and are educated in Europe, and spend much of their life abroad. Each hacienda is in charge of a mayor-domo, or manager, and the owner rarely lives on his estate, which often covers a territory many leagues in extent.

The amount of hemp, or henequen fibre, shipped from Progreso, the port of Yucatan, in 1880, was, on the authority of the United States Consul, 97,351 bales, weighing 39,501,725 pounds, and valued at \$1,750,000! As the raising of the henequen was undertaken in times comparatively recent, — within, say, twenty years, — this amount is a very good showing. This was shipped in fifty-three steamers and thirty-five sailing-vessels, and, of the total amount, 85,000 bales were sent to the United States. This industry is rapidly growing, and there is an opportunity here for capitalists, it would seem, to spend large sums. From the henequen fibre are manufactured numberless articles, for the plant has almost as many uses as the palm; but not quite so many as its sister plant of Mexico, the maguey.

In a little suburb of Merida, called Miraflores, is a factory for the manufacture of cordage, coarse cloth, and cables, from the raw fibre, which the proprietors buy from the Indians and the haciendas. Its machinery is very rapid and good, and was made in Boston some fifteen years ago. The machines are tended by Mestiza girls, who are very neat at their work, going about quietly and without even singing or whistling. They are said to be very careful and faithful, and they are very modest; and a pretty picture they present, moving about in their white skirts among the flying spindles and toothed bands, hardly looking up from their labor.

The Indian makes from the agave fibre many most necessary articles, — bags in which to carry packages, saddle-cloths, sandals, ropes, and twine; if he wants any of the last, he goes into the forest for a wild plant, beats out the filament,



twists it in a crude but satisfactory way, and is supplied. The greatest of all uses to which this filament can be applied is the manufacture of hammocks. All Yucatan sleeps in a hammock,—that is, every individual Yucateco and Yucateca sleeps in his or her individual hammock. In many towns in the State a bed is unknown. The most respectable, as well as the most



ARCH OF AKABNÁ.

lowly there, are born, live, and die in a hammock. They pass a great portion of their waking as well as sleeping hours in them. In their manufacture, then, the natives excel, and great numbers are made and shipped to New York. It is only the coarser variety that reaches the States, for the best ones command here higher prices than they could bring in New York, and rarely

leave the country. From ten to fifteen dollars is the price for a good woven hemp hammock, and some bring even twenty-five and thirty dollars. They are very durable, and endure years of wear; there is as much difference, too, in hammocks as in beds.

Yucatan has other products than hemp, but that is king. Sugar is made in the eastern portions in a limited way, but, as the best sugar lands are in the south, and all in possession of Indians supposed to be wild, but little is done in this direction. Hardly enough vegetables are raised to supply the people, and cotton only in small quantities. Regarding the culture of cotton, I should like to introduce something that I found in an old letter-book of the consulate, written by a former acting native consul in answer to inquiries from Washington.

"The culture of cotton is very little here, and is cultivated only on the southern part of this city and in a very small quantity, and grows at the extent of twelve feet. No other insect enemies of the cotton plant has been found but its worm, and the worm is exactly as mentioned on the letter, that is, a great worm with white lines and black dots. Cotton worm is always on the cotton leaf, and there is no doubt that this worm kills the plant. He does not touch the accorn of the cotton, as he remains always on the leaf. The worm has always been in the country, as it belongs to the plant. Cotton has been growing here for more than twenty years, and it grows wild, but it is inferior to the plant cultivated. The prevailing direction of winds, during the months of March, April, June, and July, are generally breeze and, southeast. Any more information that I may have respecting the cotton worm and the insect enemy of the plant I will inform immediately."

It has been my blessed privilege to inspect several such letter-books in various consulates in the south, and the amount of information contained in them is not unfrequently equalled by their rare humor, especially if the product of alien representatives.

One morning early we hired a *coche* and set out to visit the estate of Don Alvaro Peon, who had invited us to inspect his hemp plantation, and some remarkable ruins situated there. It was moonlight when we started, but as we passed the *Calle*

*del Elefante*, the "Corner of the Dead Duck," and the "Street of the Monkey," pale Luna was swallowed up in the stronger light of day. Through the grated windows, then being thrown open, we got glimpses of pretty, brown-skinned girls, with black hair and dark eyes, and loose-hung uipils, just leaving their hammocks.

On the borders of the city we encountered many mule teams, with loads of hemp, the mules tired and the drivers sleepy. Some of them had come from Valladolid, one hundred and twenty miles distant. There were also groups of Indians with great heaps of grass on their backs, and huge bundles of *ra-*



GRASS-SELLER.

*mon*, or leaves of trees used for forage, and girls and women bearing heavy loads on their shoulders supported by bands across their foreheads. They, too, were tired, some of them having travelled all night. At a distance, the glowing skins of these half-naked Indians appeared brick-red in the sun.

At noon we had reached the little village of Tixpenal, where there are the ruins of a large church surrounded by numerous thatched huts. The destruction of this church was due to one of the governors of Yucatan, who shot at a vulture on the roof and lighted the thatch, the building being destroyed, except its massive walls; these were black with buzzards. With becoming regard for the wants of the people, the governor promised to build another church, — but he never did it. As the sun grows hot, the vultures, which have been busy about the streets and back yards, and roosting on the walls and roofs, are seen sailing in circles high in air, one around the other. Between their thatched huts and their outbuildings, the Indians construct connecting arbors, over which grows a kind of gourd, the vine covering them with a thick matting, wholly impervious to the sun. So these people live in cool shade, walking about in loose cotton garments, with bare feet and legs, and with sandals on, — sandals kept in place by a line between the great toe and the next, and wound about the leg above the ankle.

We reached San Antonio late in the afternoon, and were received in a princely manner by Don Alvaro Peon, the courteous proprietor. This gentleman, a splendid specimen of manhood, cultured and travelled, is the present representative of an ancient and distinguished family, which estimates its possessions by hundreds of square leagues. In going to Uxmal, I had ridden all day, a distance of nearly fifty miles, over territory once owned by his father. This estate of San Antonio was eleven leagues square, and contained twelve hundred acres planted with henequen, and many more in process of subjection. At about seven, in the cool of the next morning, we left the hacienda for the farther one owned by him, Aké, our objective point. We rode in the coach the Empress Carlotta used when in Yucatan. Don Alvaro was her last escort when she left Mexico, and cherishes the memory of her visit as one of the brightest episodes of his life.

Driving through pleasant lanes, we emerged upon the King's Road — *el camino real* — at the town of Tixkokob. Here are made all the cheap hammocks that are sent to the United

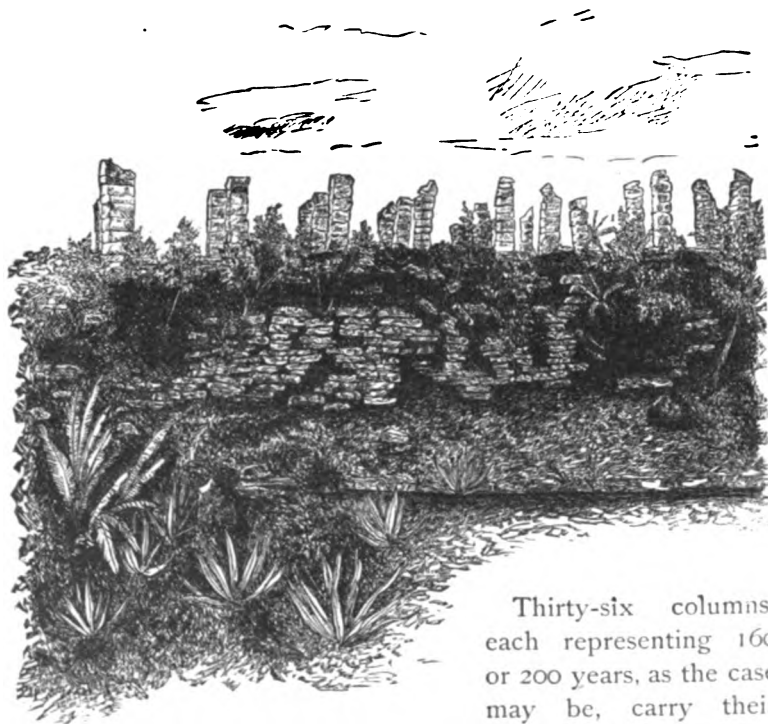
States; every hut we passed had one stretched upon a frame, with a woman engaged upon it with deft fingers. Aké, which we were then approaching, was the last place visited by Stephens, in 1842, in his famous exploration, during which he found forty-four ruined cities to describe. As he did not always subordinate present comfort to archæological requirements, he left it with a casual glance, and a remark upon the vastness of the remains. It remained for a later explorer to describe them accurately, and inquire into their meaning.

After we had despatched a substantial breakfast, in a small building used for the entertainment of visitors, Don Alvaro conducted us to the great mound, the wonder of all who have beheld it. It measures, according to Stephens, 225 by 50 feet, upon the platform, which supports thirty-six shafts, or columns, from fourteen to sixteen feet high. These are approached by an immense range of steps, 137 feet long, each step being four feet five inches wide by one foot five inches high. Pitching my camera in a prickly field of hemp, I took a general view of the entire platform with all its pillars, and then, approaching nearer, a single view of the immense columns, showing their structure.

Now, this great platform and these Titanic columns, what is their meaning? Aké, say the historians, was inhabited by Indians at the time of its discovery. A great battle was fought here, between the Spaniards under Don Francisco Montejo and the Mayas, equally sanguinary with that decisive one on the site of Merida, a little later. The early chroniclers also throw light upon these columns; they were intended, not as supports for the roof of a temple, not as altars for sacred fires, but to serve as a record of the age of the race! They were called *katunes* (epochs), says Cogolludo, and each stone represents a period of *twenty years*. Every five years, a small stone was placed on each corner of the uppermost rock, beginning at the eastern side and ending at the southern. When the final capping-stone was added, there was great festivity and rejoicing. By referring to the photographs here reproduced, the reader will note the system of construction, exactly as described by the



Spanish writers. But instead of there being *eight* great stones in every column, as they say, there are in some cases *nine*, and even *ten*. This, however, is of little moment; there may have been ten in every column,—probably were,—the topmost one of which may have fallen off. Thus the column would be finished when an even two hundred years had swung its round, and then left to stand forever, as a monument to the people who had erected it and as an epoch in the world's great cycle.



GENERAL VIEW OF AKÉ.

Thirty-six columns, each representing 160 or 200 years, as the case may be, carry their antiquity back to a very early date indeed.

"There was," says a learned writer, "an undeniable lapse of 5,760 years from the time the first stone was placed on the platform until the place was abandoned; and we know that this very town of Aké was still inhabited at the time of the Spanish conquest." Whether this be so, or, as another erudite antiqua-

rian queries, whether "they may have served as symbolical history, set up as memorials of past antiquity," they are the work of giants, — remains Cyclopean. Immense rocks, that it would take many men to lift, ranged pile on pile, by some deluded yet painstaking people; yet all this work, this mighty labor, has gone for naught!

By climbing to the top of one of the columns, one can look over the extensive plain for twenty miles; the little towns in the distance betokened by trees of darker green and white walls, mounds dotting the landscape in every direction, and the nearer pastures overgrown with prickly shrubs. Close by the house, built out of the ruins of a former one, are two mounds, one with immense flat stones as steps, known as the "House of the Priest." The ground is cleared immediately about the house, and a flower garden blossoms among dismantled walls, while a hemp machine performs its duty close under the shadow of the great katunes. Within the circle of older ruins are the remains of a Spanish battery, built, probably, after the bloody fight of Aké. As this place is used only as a *rancho*, or cattle farm, no improvements are going on, and it is inhabited only by a few Indians and the mayor-domo.

West of the great platform are other mounds, one of which contains a stone structure called *Akabud*, or dark house. The mound was evidently terraced, like the others, many a great block remaining *in situ*. It is now an undistinguishable mass of rocks, the central portion having fallen in, and is covered with cactus, agave, and wild wood. We descended into one of the rooms and started up a vulture, which crawled into one of the many holes and hissed at us, at the same time emitting a fetid odor. This apartment evidently led into another, and the Consul bravely explored the various dark retreats, but without succeeding in finding anything of value. Here was also the peculiar Maya arch, of ruder form than that of Uxmal, more nearly approaching the arch of Palenque, — the inner and overlapping stones not being dressed or bevelled; besides, there was a further departure, in alternate layers of stone and mortar, but with a cap, as in Uxmal, instead of a keystone.

In wandering through the pastures, we stumbled into a hole and were nearly precipitated into a yawning chasm, which further investigation showed to lead into a *cenote* about forty feet deep and ninety broad, with a little water in it. This was about midday, and the air outside was intensely hot, though in this cavern it was very cool and refreshing. We found here eight



THE GREAT KATUNES.

girls and women, seated on the rocks beside the water, braiding hemp. There was one extremely attractive, with light complexion and an intelligent face. They were not a whit curious, as negroes or white people would have been, but took our advent quietly, without a laugh or questioning glance. Indeed, these Mayas bear evidence by their deportment that they have descended from a polite and cultured race. They came here



to this damp cavern to braid their hemp, for use in simple articles of domestic manufacture, as the moist air facilitates the process.

We sat awhile in this strange reception hall, while our man went for some coco nuts, with the sweet water of which we slaked our thirst. A great number of lizards and iguanas were running about the ledges, and I shot several that seemed new to me. One was a hideous reptile of the saurian type, with twelve callosities on his legs, each one of which, our Indian said, meant a year. Another, which I also shot with my pistol, had a pointed tail, and the Maya was much excited when I went to pick it up from the rock where it was still struggling, saying that it would throw its tail at me as it expired, inflicting a poisonous wound. There was, he said, another lizard that would bite your shadow, as you crossed its path, causing you terrible pains in the head thereby. These Indians are full of superstitions, believing in witchcraft, in avenging spirits, and in ghosts, and endowing every kind of creeping thing with some supernatural attribute.

As the sun's rays glanced horizontally along the level fields, the mules were harnessed, and we returned to San Antonio, leaving behind us those grand, suggestive, yet mute memorials of a departed people; the oldest monuments—that is, of Indians who had approached civilization—that this new country can exhibit; the oldest, perhaps, in America.

## V.

### MAYAPAN, THE ANCIENT EMPIRE.

IN bringing to a close these desultory remarks upon the ruins of Yucatan, I am reminded that there yet remain two of the most important groups, Mayapan and Chichen-Itza, without which the hundred-mile radius around Merida would be incomplete. Mayapan, about thirty miles south of Merida, was the seat of the ancient Maya empire, and the city was called *El Pendon de los Mayas* — the banner city of the country — by the early Spanish writers on Yucatan. Here, in this ancient city, among the ruins of palaces once occupied by native kings, it would seem most fitting that we should review, though hastily, the aboriginal history of Yucatan, as it has been handed down to us. According to the Maya genesis, as interpreted by Spanish priests and monks, the Creator formed the first man of a handful of *sacate* (or grass) and earth; from the latter came his flesh and bones, and from the grass his skin and his comely appearance. Dwarfs and giants were the first people of this portion of the country, and the former, as usual, always got the better of the latter.

The most ancient traditions seem to point to two distinct immigrations into the peninsula; but it is usually conceded that there existed, in that portion of Central America where Yucatan, Guatemala, and Southern Mexico come together, a great and potent theocratic empire. This was in ages past. Successive immigrations, from the north and from the south, have swept over it, until all distinctive race individuality of the people who lived there has been obliterated. The capital city of this empire was Xibalba (*Hibalba*), thought to be the Palenque of the present day. The tribes coming down from the north, the Nahuatls, built another city, which they called Tula, or Tulhá, near the

present town of Ocosingo, in Chiapas. And if we may place credence in that perhaps mythical "sacred book" of the Quiches called the *Ah-Tza*, the *Itzaes* (*Ah Tzaes*), present inhabitants of Peten, are lineal descendants of the dwellers in Xibalba. Although traces of three distinct immigrations into Yucatan are evident, — the Itzaes, Mayas, and Caribs, — yet they all spoke one tongue, the Maya, at the coming of the Spaniards. The Itzaes founded cities in the northeastern portion of the peninsula, found in ruins to-day: Chichen-Itza, Itzamel, and T'ho, the site of the last occupied by the capital city of Merida.

In the fifth and sixth centuries the Mayas came, followed by the Tutul Xius. The former founded Mayapan, and the latter settled themselves in the region of which Uxmal is the centre. In the strifes that ensued between the Itzaes and Mayas, the latter attained to prominence and ruled the country, while the former retired to Chichen. The head of the ruling family was one Cocom, from whom descended the princes of Mayapan. The increasing importance of the Tutul Xius so alarmed the Maya ruler that he imported troops from Tabasco; but a century later the dreaded residents of Uxmal marched upon Mayapan, and, after a long and bloody struggle, razed it to the ground. About this time the Itzaes, who seem to have been of a more peaceful nature, abandoned their city of Chichen and buried themselves in the vast forests of Guatemala. We shall meet with them again. These events happened in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In 1446, it is chronicled, King Cocom of Mayapan, with all his sons save one, was murdered by his nobles. Less than a century later the Spaniards became lords of the peninsula, and found Mayapan in ruins. It had been destroyed by the murderers of Cocom. Stephens, who visited Yucatan forty years ago, found among the ruins a great circular mound, and some sculptured stones, but of their origin and significance he was ignorant. It was left for another explorer, Dr. Augustus Le Plongeon, to complete the work of investigation. From his latest report to the American Antiquarian Society, — yet in manuscript when this was written, — the following details of his discoveries at Mayapan are gathered.

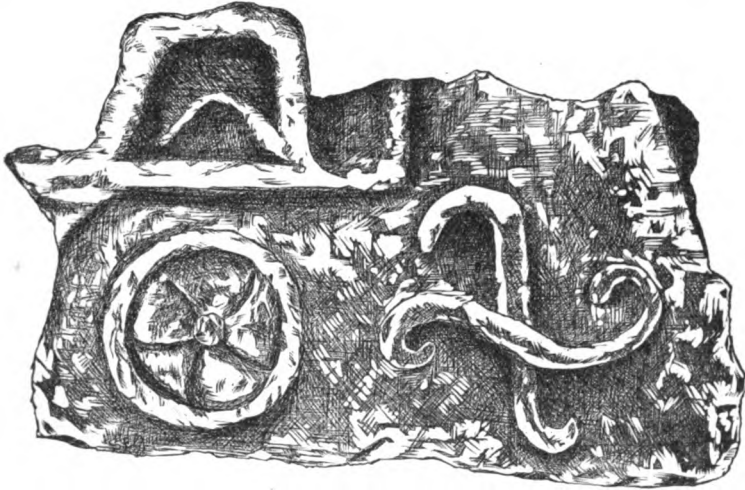
Among the ruins was found a stone, one of the two above mentioned, inscribed with characters. Of this a cast was taken, and sent to New York. The stone was one metre sixty-two centimetres high, and twenty-six centimetres wide. The inscription on it represents the king, Cocom, who was tributary to Chaacmol, king of Chichen-Itza, and whose portrait, full-length, is on the castle wall of Chichen. Dr. Le Plongeon writes:—

“Next we will meet him in the reception-room of Queen Kinich-Kakmo, the wife and sister of the great King Chaacmol. That king, Cocom, is the personage represented on the *antla* of the castle, in the bas-reliefs of the Queen's Chamber, at Chichen, and on the slab found by the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, in Mayapan. One has only to look at his unique, unmistakable nose, his short stature, and towering hat, to become satisfied of the fact of his identity. And then his name,—it is symbolized by a little yellow flower, in some cases closed, in others open. In the Maya dictionary, *cocom* is a plant with yellow flowers, from the leaves of which, during the feast of Saint John, people make a kind of cigar. Cocom was the name of an ancient Maya dynasty, and is still preserved as an Indian family name among the natives of Yucatan. By the number of feathers in the cap of the king is indicated his exalted rank. The man before him holds a scroll,—and this is proven by Landa, that they had scrolls, written on large leaves, folded and enclosed between two boards.

When any of the ancient family of Cocom died, the principal lords cut off their heads and cooked them, in order to clean the meat from the bones, after which they sawed off the hind part of the skull, preserving the front with its jaws and teeth. They then replaced the flesh on the half-skull with a certain putty, giving them the same appearance they had when alive; they then placed them among their cinerary statues, which they had with their idols in their oratorios, and looked upon them with great reverence and love.”

On the smaller slab the Doctor found, he says, inscriptions that his knowledge of the Maya tongue enabled him to translate, which were intended for the God of Fire, represented among the Mayas by the same hieroglyph that the Egyptians used for the Sun God, and by the emblems of one of the principal gods of the Assyrians. On the “Gnomon Mound” of Mayapan there

were found two *stelæ*, situated about one hundred metres from the southwest corner of the principal pyramid (named anciently Kukulcan), the first of the kind seen during a long and careful



"HIEROGLYPH OF THE GOD OF FIRE."

exploration of the ruined cities of Yucatan. Of them Dr. Le Plongeon says: —

"Following the detours of an obscure trail, we at last reached the foot of a small mound, eight metres high, eleven metres fifty centimetres wide at the base. The platform (on top), four metres seventy centimetres on the north and south sides by three metres on the east and west, sustained two perpendicular *stelæ*, forty-five centimetres in diameter and one metre high from the floor, which once was perfectly level and paved with beautifully hewn slabs of stone. To-day it is covered with ten centimetres of loam, the product of three centuries and a half of deposition. The distance between the centres of the *stelæ* is one metre seventy centimetres, their orientation as perfect as it could be done to-day with our improved instruments."

By careful measurements, Dr. Le Plongeon arrived at the conclusion that the ancient Mayas correctly calculated the true declination of the sun; and he adds that the Maya astronomers divided their astronomical year into twelve months of thirty days

each, to which they added the five days when they said the sun was resting. "Here again we find another point of contact with the Egyptians and the Chaldeans." Of course, says the Doctor, by noticing the length of the shadows projected by the stelæ on the smooth floor of the platform, they could know the hour of the day; at night — as the Indians do even to-day — they could tell the time quite accurately by observing the courses of the stars. By placing a style, or any narrow object, on the top of the columns so as to rest on the centres, and noticing when its shadow fell perpendicularly on the platform, and covered exactly the line they had traced for that purpose between the stelæ, they knew when the sun passed their zenith, which phenomenon occurs twice every year, in March and July.

The Doctor remarks that he has adopted the use of the metric standard of linear measure as much from necessity as from choice, and from "the strange discovery that the metre is the only measure of dimension which agrees with that adopted by these most ancient artists and architects." The explorer continues: —

"We cannot suppose that the gnomon was built at random; that the diameter of the stelæ and the distance they are placed from one another are wholly fortuitous. . . . Judging of past humanity by the present, we must of necessity agree that these diameters and this distance of the centres are the result of accurate calculations and knowledge. . . . I have taken for granted that they knew when the sun had reached the tropics, and therefore its greatest declination, —  $23^{\circ} 27'$ , — because the days that the declination does not vary they called by a name signifying, according to Pio Perez,<sup>1</sup> the bed or place where the sun rests.

"To sum up: These builders seem to have taken as bases for their calculation the latitude of the place and the declination of the sun when at his resting-place, — as they called the solstitial points. That this manner of computing time was used by the primitive inhabitants of the great metropolis, Chichen-Itza, or by those who dwelt in it when at the height of its splendor, when scholars flocked from all parts of the world to consult its wise men, is more than at present we can positively know. . . .

<sup>1</sup> "Maya Chronology," by Señor Don Juan Pio Perez, first published in the Appendix to Stephens's "Incidents of Travel in Yucatan."



NORTH FACADE OF NUN'S PALACE, CHICHEN.





"We know that in the most remote times they represented the God-head under the symbol of the mastodon-head. Notwithstanding their great respect for the memory of their ancestors, so strongly inculcated that even to-day they would not fail to prepare the *hanal pixan* — the food of the souls — and offer it in peculiar places on All-Saints' day, in after ages this emblem — the mastodon-head — became replaced by that of the winged serpent, Kukulcan, or Ahi, even in the city of the holy and wise men, the Itzaes; whilst in Uxmal and other places, where in time the Nahautl religion prevailed, the phallic emblems were coupled with those of the sun, the fire, and the mastodon-head.

"The monuments of these people also show the changes which have taken place in the architectural taste in consequence of alteration in the customs and in the ideas and in the mode of life of the people, caused perhaps by immigrations and invasions, — probably by commercial intercourse and frequent communication by sea and land with the neighboring nations. The ornamentation of the edifices also tells us of the progress of the artists in drawing and sculpture.

"The great mound of Mayapan, which reveals such perfect mathematical symmetry in all its parts, shows that the Maya architects were as well acquainted with the rules of trigonometry as their friends the astronomers. It will call to mind that oldest structure of the plains of Chaldea, — the graduated towers so characteristic of Babylonia, of which the oldest type known in history is the tower of Babel, — and on its top the priests of the Mayas, as the Magi, elevated above the mists of the plain below, could track through the cloudless sky the movements of the stars; instead of cutting out there the hearts of human victims, as a celebrated author suggests. . . .

"This mound, now very dilapidated, is an oblong, truncated pyramid, measuring on the north and west sides at the base thirty-two metres, and fourteen metres on top; on the east and west sides at the base twenty-seven metres, and ten metres on top. On the four faces stairways are cut of sixty steps, each twenty-five centimetres high; it appears as if composed of seven superposed platforms, all of the same height, — one metre seventy centimetres, — each one being smaller than the one immediately below. Throughout Yucatan seven seems to have been the mystic number, as among other ancient nations. In the plains of Babylon there were no stones, and the builders of the 'temple of the seven lights' made the core of the structure with sun-dried clay, and the facings with hard-burnt bricks. In Yucatan, where there is no clay, but stones, the core

is found of loose stones with blocks of the same material carefully hewn for the facing. The mode of building, however, was identical among the Mayas and the Chaldeans. Again, there is shown an identity of ideas in the artists who decorated the walls at Chichen-Itza and Babylon."

In his essay on the language of the Mayas, Dr. Le Plongeon stated that they employed many words and names common to all, or nearly all, the ancient languages of which we have knowledge; that they used letters and characters belonging to the most ancient Chaldaic alphabet; and their mode of writing, in squares, was similar to that of the Babylonians. He adds: —

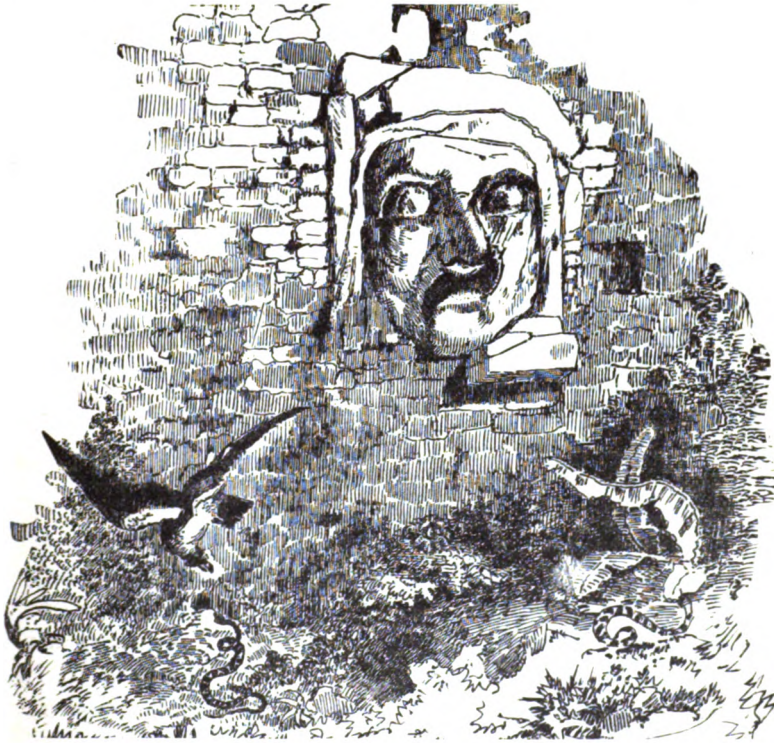
"So also we see that their architecture partakes of that of the Egyptians and the Babylonians, besides having a style that belongs to none of these ancient nations. That they had 'perpendicular' pyramids, with their faces to the cardinal points, like the Egyptians, the mound of Mayapan proves. But the great mound situated on the north side of the principal square of Izamal, on the top of which used to be a temple dedicated to Kinich-Kakmo, the queen of Chichen, is an oblique pyramid, the very counterpart of the 'Temple of the Moon' at Mugheir."

The curious reader may find the gist of the preceding statements regarding the civilization of the Mayas in Landa's interesting book, *Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan*. Even though we may not accept the conclusions of this intrepid explorer, "that the cradle of the world's civilization is this continent on which we live," we must assign to the Maya people an elevated rank among the civilized nations of the world, and great antiquity.

We might note, before leaving Mayapan, that, according to Cogolludo (an old historian, writing in 1655), all the nobles of the country had houses in that city before its destruction, and were exempted from tribute. But now, he says, "these nobles, the descendants of Tutul Xiu, who was the king and natural lord, if they do not work with their own hands, have nothing to eat."

Directly east of Merida, connected by a great high-road, is Izamal, the ancient Itzamal of the Itzaes, founded by them first of any city in the peninsula. Itzamna is the first person mentioned in the annals of the peninsula, a hero apotheosized

and a great leader in the first Itza invasion. "In the centre of a region of waters" they built a city called Itzamal, and here they established the worship of Zamna, consisting of the offerings of flowers and fruit. To this religious centre flocked pilgrims by thousands, and it is thought that the gigantic head of stucco, to-day seen in the city of Izamal, was the object of their idolatry.



GIGANTIC HEAD.

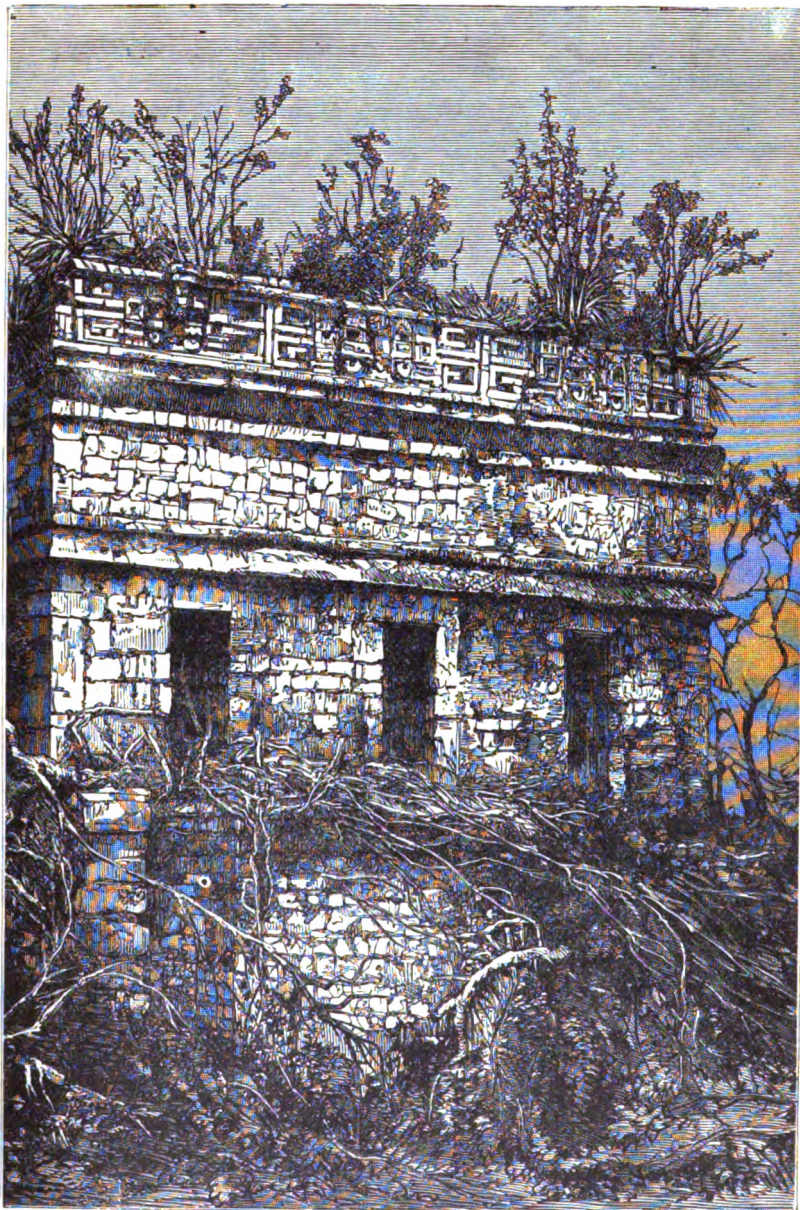
The city itself is quiet, and a desirable place of residence. One of its other attractions is an immense mound, supposed to have been the foundation for an ancient temple; and a paved road is said to lead from this place to the ruins of Tulum. As early as 1549, the Indians, under Spanish guidance, erected here the celebrated monastery of San Antonio.

Continuing on from Izamal, bending our course southward, we shall eventually reach the attractive though unfortunate city of Valladolid, thirty-seven leagues distant from Merida. It is celebrated as the first city in which a cotton-mill was erected in Yucatan, in 1834, but has a melancholy interest from its almost complete destruction in the revolution of the Indians, in 1847.

This great uprising of the indigenous race had its origin in the period of independence, in 1821, when Mexico separated from Spain. In Yucatan, as in Mexico, the large landed proprietors were opposed to separation from the mother country, while the bulk of the population, who owned no property, were in favor of it. The question later arose of an amalgamation with Mexico, which gave rise to two parties, — for and against. Both invoked aid from the Indians, — the *raza indigena*, — and placed arms in their hands, and filled their ears with promises. After the struggle was over and the Mexicans expelled, the Indians were dismissed to their homes in the eastern portion of the peninsula. All the promises made them were evaded, and so they returned sullen and empty-handed — except that they kept the arms — and later used them!

In 1846 local politics ran high between the provinces of Merida and Campeche, and they came to blows. It was the Indians' opportunity; everywhere, in the east, there was a great uprising. The eastern coast was swept with fire and sword. Valladolid, a city of 12,000 inhabitants, and Tekax, with 5,000, were completely abandoned; and gradually all northern, eastern, and southeastern Yucatan seemed to be returning to its primitive owners. The indigenous people ravaged the country, burning, pillaging, murdering, until the whites were panic-stricken and fled towards the coast. The red men recollected the centuries of wrong they had endured, and vowed to wage against the white race a war of extermination. The Creole population of Yucatan appealed for aid to the United States, to Mexico, and to Spain. At last, Mexico, having concluded its war with the United States, sent succor, and very gradually the rebels — the *sublevados* — were driven back. But it was years





THE CARCEL, CHICHEN.



before the country breathed of peace, and even now thousands of square miles are desolate, and hundreds of towns lie in ruins. By this act of calling in aid from Mexico, Yucatan lost her autonomy, and soon after became one of the confederated states of the republic. Valladolid has never recovered from its terrible injuries; although, from its geographical position, and the vast unoccupied country of which it is the centre, it is destined to become again prosperous and populous.

Lying west from Valladolid, about thirty miles, is the largest, and next to Uxmal the most important, group of ruins in Yucatan, that of Chichen-Itza. The ruined structures occupy an area of about two miles, and a high-road passes near them. They are accurately described in various writings, so that I will not do more than enumerate them here. Of these ruins, the most magnificent pile is the "House of the Nuns," very rich in sculpture, while the "Carcel," or "Tower," is the grandest and most conspicuous object in Chichen. The "Gymnasium" contains great stone rings set in the wall, four feet in diameter, and with a sculptured border of serpents. The hieroglyphic carvings are wonderful and beautiful, and the mural paintings, representing warriors in battle and events in the lives of the various rulers of Chichen, are artistic in execution, and the finest that adorn the walls of any buildings yet discovered. A procession of lynxes, or tigers, adorns the cornice of one building, while sculptured slabs and pillars are scattered profusely over the ground.

This was the ancient capital of the Itzaes, after they had been driven from Itzamal and before they sought seclusion in Peten. Various attempts have been made to reconstruct their history, from the scattered fragments left by tradition and from the mural paintings and hieroglyphs, but as yet with little success. Although Stephens gives an exhaustive description of Chichen, yet Norman<sup>1</sup> claims to be the first visitor from a foreign country to describe it from personal observation. "No marks," he says, "of human footsteps, no signs of previous visitors, were discoverable; nor is there good reason to believe that any person, whose testimony of the past has been given to the world, had

<sup>1</sup> "Rambles in Yucatan," New York, 1843.

ever before broken the silence which reigns over these sacred tombs of a departed civilization."

It is known, however, that a portion of Montejo's army marched through here, and found the great buildings a secure defence against the assailing Indians, in the first invasion.

For seven years, that energetic archæologist, Le Plongeon, has studied the hieroglyphs of Yucatan. A linguist of no mean attainments, adding to a knowledge of modern languages an acquaintance with the Maya, the native tongue of the peninsula, he has had unusual success in his work. It is to him that the world owes the bringing to the light of the beautiful statue of Chaacmol, now in the Mexican Museum. This monolith, "Chaacmol, the Tiger-King," was unearthed by Dr. Le Plongeon at Chichen, in the midst of a dense forest, *eight metres below the surface*; — found by his powers of divination, the Indians say; but by his knowledge of the hieroglyphs, the Doctor says, on the walls of the near buildings. By almost superhuman exertions, the Doctor raised the great statue, which is over nine feet in length, from its burial-place, — the story of its exhumation reads like romance, but the *photographs*, taken at successive stages of the work, substantiate the narrative in every particular, — and transported it to what he thought was a place of safety.<sup>1</sup> Alas for his calculations, and for the scientists of the United States! While he was absent, exploring the islands of Cozumel and Mujeres, his precious discovery was seized by the Mexican government and carried to Mexico.

Of the mural paintings of Chichen, the most beautiful and unique in America, the Doctor and his wife have an extensive series of tracings, which I was fortunate enough to be allowed to examine in Merida. Chichen, though only one hundred miles from the capital, is considered rather unsafe at present, owing to its being within the territory of the unconquered Indians, and an escort of soldiers is needed for the last thirty miles of the journey, and while among the ruins.

<sup>1</sup> "The reports of his discoveries seem at first wellnigh fabulous, though their authenticity is so well attested as to leave no room for doubt." — John T. Short, "The North Americans of Antiquity."



It is to be hoped that, when Dr. Le Plongeon shall have completed his explorations, he will give to the world a connected account of his discoveries, embellished with his photographs and enlivened with the sparkling descriptions of his talented and devoted wife. At present, we are indebted to the American Antiquarian Society<sup>1</sup> for several valuable illustrated papers on these investigations, and especially to the scholarly editor, Mr. Stephen Salisbury, Jr., through whose liberality and unwearied exertions they were published.

The predominant character of these Maya structures, says the historian of Yucatan, Señor Ancona, is that all are built upon an artificial elevation; a pyramid or truncate cone supporting a building more or less vast and grand. The walls are generally of great thickness, many are faced on the exterior with carved stone, and many also present a rich profusion of adornments, sculptured in bas-relief upon their faces.



CHAACMOL.

Busts and human heads, figures of animals, and hieroglyphics — which nobody has yet been able to decipher — constitute in general these adornments. The finest workmanship is displayed in broad and elevated cornices; and the spectator does not know which most to admire in the artist, — the prodigious number of small pieces with which he composed the work, or the beauty and accuracy to nature of the scenes represented. The doors are generally low and the lintels of wood, some richly sculptured.

<sup>1</sup> For detailed descriptions see "The Mayas, the Sources of their History," 1877; "Maya Archaeology," 1879; etc. Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

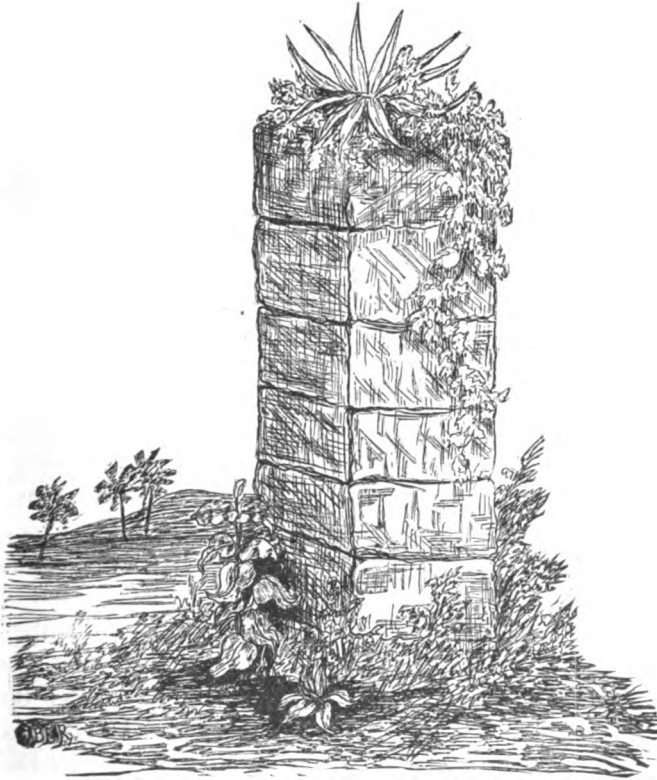
The ceiling is formed by the peculiar American arch, and owing to their construction not much breadth can be got, but great length.

Most of these ruined cities have remained in the silence and obscurity of the wildernesses in which they are immured, ever since the traveller Stephens visited them, more than forty years ago. Kabah, especially, has not had a white visitor, it is said, since that time, until within two years. In June, 1881, this group was visited by the United States Consul, Mr. Louis H. Aymé, his wife, and Mr. Porter C. Bliss, assistant editor of Johnson's Cyclopædia. Mr. Aymé is an enthusiastic explorer, who is indefatigable in his search after objects of interest to the antiquarians of America. Owing to his exertions, there was brought to light an object that had escaped the attention of all previous explorers. It was a rude painting of "a man mounted on horseback." This important discovery was made by Mr. Aymé on June 16th, 1881; and it gives me pleasure to chronicle such a "find" by such a genial gentleman, who was so helpful to me in Yucatan, and who, in company with Mr. Bliss, rode nearly a thousand miles with me, later, in Southern Mexico.

At a later period, Mr. Aymé again visited Kabah, this time in company with the distinguished archaeologist, M. Désirée Charnay, who immediately pronounced it a wonderful discovery, and praised his companion highly. He, M. Charnay, declared it to be "a figure of a Spanish horseman, with his cuirass, and prancing on a fiery steed": and claimed that his theory — that these ruins have not a great antiquity — was proved completely! Dr. Le Plongeon, however, who claims for the ruined cities of Yucatan that they were hoary with the weight of years when the Parthenon was built, would fain induce us to believe that this picture is a portrait of an ancient worthy named Can, who flourished many centuries ago. In fine, one archaeologist "proves" from the same mural painting, that these ruins are less than one thousand years old, while the other is equally certain they have an antiquity of at least ten thousand years!

Readers of the North American Review for the past few years cannot fail to have noticed that M. Charnay started on his

explorations in Central America with preconceived notions as to the age and builders of these cities; and he has ingeniously twisted every discovery into a "proof" in favor of his pet theory; which unfortunate manner of working vitiates all the labor heretofore done.



A COLUMN AT AKÉ.

## VI.

### A GRAND TURKEY HUNT.

“With us ther was a Doctor of Physike,  
In all this world ne was ther won him like  
To speak of physike, and of surgerie.”

I T was drawing near the close of my stay in Yucatan, and there was but a week remaining; but the Consul had planned one last trip into the country that should eclipse all previous expeditions. He promised to take me on a grand turkey hunt. The magnificent turkey of Yucatan, the *Melcagris ocellatus*, is found only there and in Honduras and Guatemala. It is the most beautiful of the whole family. Though there are three species in North America, one peculiar to the United States and another to Mexico, and though our species is the largest, the ocellated turkey of Yucatan surpasses them all in the metallic sheen and lustre of its plumage. It was to capture this glorious bird, then, that this final journey in Yucatan was undertaken.

At eleven o'clock at night, our *volan* drove up to the door, and the Consul, and John, myself, and another man, crawled into it and wedged ourselves together. The reader does n't know John, but I do; and that is where I have the advantage of the reader. John was a dentist, one of the few practitioners of the bloody art of dentistry who could draw a tooth without gloating over the misery he caused. In token that we appreciated this manly quality of his gentle nature, we took him along to let him see us shoot turkeys.

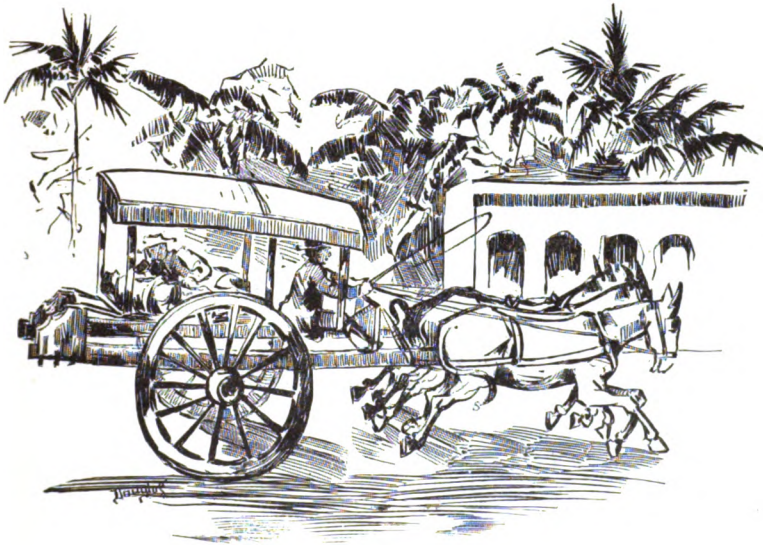
“*Alerta!*” the watch-cry of the sentinel pacing in front of the municipal palace, rang clear on the midnight air, as we climbed into our *volan*.

"Who goes there?" shouted another sentinel at the city gate, as we dashed beneath its arched portal and sped away into the country.

"*Amigos!*" was our reply, and, settling ourselves snugly on the mattress, we prepared for sleep.

We set out on our journey at midnight. The heat of day in Yucatan is so great that all travel is done by night.

"Now, José," said the Consul, "put the mules to their best, because we have sixty miles to do before to-morrow noon."



THE VOLAN-COCHÉ.

"*Si, señor,*" replied José, and then he stood out on the dashboard and plied the whip till the speeding mules were hidden in a cloud of dust.

Stretching ourselves on our bed, we almost immediately went to sleep, José's cries of "*Moola, moola! hoo, hoo, hoo!*" acting as a lullaby.

A volan is intended for only two persons, who lie extended upon the mattress, and take refreshing naps as they are driven

along. But we four had to double ourselves up, resting our chins on our knees; a revolver was pressed against my spine, a small bird-gun tangled up with my legs, and all the legs of our trousers crawled up above our knees, where they remained in uncomfortable wads. We finally got to sleep, however, leaving the driver whooping and yelling at the mules, just as we hove in sight of the white walls of a hacienda. Even though the position was uncomfortable, it was pleasant to reflect that the volan would be going all the time we were sleeping, and our journey of sixty miles would be so much shorter when we awoke.

It might have been three hours later that we were awakened by loud cursing and howling, and, looking out of the volan, saw Señor Acosta, our *compañero*, by the side of the road, thrashing the driver. Having walloped him to his heart's content, he crawled back among us and explained that, while we were indulging in a nap, the driver also had taken one; and, if we would look out, we should see the same hacienda that was in sight before we closed our eyes. This was discouraging, but we took it out of the mules and the driver, from there on, by taking watch and watch. At three in the morning we drove into the silent, deserted square of a village. All the houses were closed, of course, but the mules were taken out and given a refreshing change; that is, the inside mule was put on the outside. A long row of buildings was in front of us, and our driver commenced at one end and pounded at every door till he reached the farther end; then he began again and went down the whole row, till the last of them was opened. I inquired what was the matter, and, being told that one of the cart-wheels was twisted, supposed they were stopping for something to remedy the twist; but, after we all had been invited in and had a drink of *habanero*, we went on again, as before.

It was yet dark, though the road was fairly crowded with Indians going to Merida to market, some of whom had come from a distance of thirty or forty miles, staggering beneath heavy loads of grass, vegetables, and charecoal. Passing another volan, our driver raced with it, each man standing out on the shafts and encouraging the jaded mules with loud yells and

repeated applications of a raw-hide thong. We finally passed the other volan, but a sudden pulling up of the mules caused us all to look out, when we saw that we had run into a party of Indians, and unhorsed a woman, who picked herself up out of the dust and limped to the roadside, sullenly and without a word, while her terrified steed dashed away out of sight. Then we went on again, furiously, and at daylight were entering the street of an inland town called Motul, ten leagues from Merida. Already many people were in the street, and we entered a house and got a cup of chocolate, after which John and I visited the cathedral, built in 1651. The altar was nearly stripped of ornaments, but there yet remained two massive candelabra of solid silver.

A mile from the plaza, we came to the famous *cenote* of Motul, one of those used by the aborigines of Yucatan. It is the deepest hereabouts, and the water can only be seen by looking down a deep well; but there is an entrance by a larger hole, through which you reach a great chamber, very dark and gloomy, and swarming with bats and lizards. Undressing in this chamber, you enter the water, the glimmer of which is visible by going in some ways, and swim towards the light, then, by diving under a ledge that falls from the roof above nearly to the surface, you find yourself in the circular opening some sixty feet beneath the surface of the earth. It is not a pleasant place to bathe in at all, but it is



RAMON SELLER (*Vendedor de Ramon*).



cool and dark, and in refreshing contrast to the glare and heat outside.

A strange bird lives in these cenotes, called the "Toh," a species of *Momotus*. He is about a foot in length, with fine silky feathers and a very curious tail. It is formed of two long feathers, which are stripped nearly to their tip, only the naked shafts remaining.

A friend, Professor George Gaumer, who has spent two years in Yucatan, says that he has often found the cenotes swarming with alligators at times, when at others not one could be found. From this he very reasonably infers an underground connection with large bodies of water by subterranean rivers.

There is said to be a cenote in the town of Tabi, in the centre of which, at midday, when the sun is perpendicularly above the water, there appears the image of a most beautiful palm tree. Near Tikoh is another, into which, says Cogolludo, writing in 1655, if any one enters without holding his breath, he dies instantly; therefore, none are desirous of bathing in it. In breathing, or making any other noise, they say the commotion of the water is excessive, and that the noise poisons the water, and that it has caused the death of many Indians while drawing water from it.

Another writer mentions another cenote, one of the largest in the peninsula, in the centre of the public square of the village of Telchaquillo. At a distance "the square seemed level and unbroken; but women walking across with *cantaros*, or water-jars, on their heads, suddenly disappeared, and others seemed to rise up out of the earth."

There are many palm trees about Motul, and pawpaws, and other tropical plants. The flowers are profuse and beautiful, and the Mestiza girls as lovely as they can be. Yet we did not tarry long, but drove on, after a breakfast and a nap, through a fertile country of Sisal hemp and corn, to the next town. Driving rapidly over a good road, we entered the unending scrub plains of Yucatan. We passed a great many Indians, mostly women, and mostly more or less inebriated; not violently drunk, but enough to make them happy and smiling.



At two o'clock we drove into the large open square of Can-sahcab, a neat little town, mostly of thatched houses, containing the best-preserved church and presbytery in the State. The meaning of the name of this town, which is Indian, is, that you may hunt a long time for water and not find it. This the Consul proved to be true, for he looked everywhere for a drink, but came back to us without having found it. As it was in the heat of the day, everybody was in his hammock, and every house was closed. Great flocks of blackbirds were in the square, the only living things in sight. The number of birds about these Indian villages, and their tameness, speak well for the gentle nature of the inhabitants.

Though we had but twelve miles farther to go, it would not do to pass through the town without seeing the head man; so we waited while he was sent for. After an hour, he came galloping in from his hacienda, — a large, good-looking, sensible man, of about fifty, in loose shirt, drawers, and sandals. He was delighted to see us, and ordered beer and refreshments at once, declared that we were going no farther that day, and turned our mules directly into his enclosure. This is the way they travel throughout Yucatan, — two or three hours on the road, and six or eight in drinking and chatting. Our host, General Theodosio Canto, was one of the famous men of the State. He has served a short term as Governor, and is the greatest man, the chief, of this portion of Yucatan. He has headed several revolutions, fighting long and obstinately. A long scar over his eye shows where he was terribly cut in one fight, when, also, his nose was nearly severed, and he was left on the field; yet he was out and fighting again two weeks afterward. He says that the blood he had in him then flowed out, and what he has now is all new.

The General told us that his town was seldom honored with such distinguished visitors as we, and that night he would give us a grand Mestiza ball. After an early dinner we went with the General and invited all the young ladies to the ball: the old ones and the men and boys were sure to come without asking. These young ladies had rather short notice, but then they had but little preparation to make, for they wear generally but two garments

They have only to change the over and under skirt, dust a little powder over their arms and shoulders, dab a little rouge here and there, and hang on all the chains and jewelry they own, and then they are ready for anything.

At eight o'clock the village band came to escort us to the *Casa Municipal*, or the city hall, the corridor of which (one hundred feet long) had been swept, and decorated with palm branches. A great throng followed us, letting off rockets and fire-crackers, and in this way we were escorted to the scene of festivity. As we arrived, the crowd about the *portales* parted right and left, and we were conducted to the seats of honor. The sight that greeted our eyes nearly took our breath away; for there, ranged in chairs along the wall, was a row of the prettiest Mestiza girls we had ever seen. They were dressed in their becoming costume of snowy white, and some of them fairly glittering in gold chains and ornaments. The ancient national costume of the Mayas, from whom these Indians are descended, was, for the women, two skirts of fine white linen: the under skirt reaches from the waist to the ground, and is called *pic*; the upper, called *uipil*, falls from the shoulders, over the lower, to the knees. These are embroidered in gay colors, and often edged with lace. According to an ancient law, there should be no button or fastening on the uipil, and it is cut square, very low in the neck and back, so that it can be slipped over the head, and worn without any fastening. As a race, these people are symmetrically shaped, and the loose dress of the females sets off their beautiful shoulders to great advantage. About fifty of these lovely damsels sat awaiting our arrival. From among these the General, John, and the Consul selected partners, and were soon treading the light fantastic toe. I did not dance, and sat solitary in a secluded corner, enjoying the bright scene: the long, broad corridor lit with torches, the dark masses of Indians hemming us in, and the *señoritas* and *caballeros* in their gay costumes.

An old man, who had fixed his eyes on me some time previously, approached and asked me if I would not sit by his daughter and talk English to her. She was a sweet, blooming damsel,

fair to look upon, in sooth, and I had not the heart to refuse such a reasonable request; so I went as directed, and opened a conversation.



MESTIZA AND MESTIZO.

Soon I noticed that, though she paid the closest attention, and nodded her pretty head and winked her lovely eyes at intervals, still she made no replies, save *Si, señor*, and *No, señor*, and not always bringing these in at the right place. Then

it dawned upon me that my aged friend was playing a game on me by getting me to talk English to a girl who did n't understand one word of the language. But when I expostulated with him, he replied, innocently and in good faith, that his daughter could not speak English certainly, and, moreover, she had never heard it spoken before, nor had any other of the young ladies in the room; but he hoped I would not refuse to gratify her curiosity to hear it. And just then the blushing beauty smiled bewitchingly, and said that she understood my English very well, and that the old man could just go along about his business, or words to that effect.

Well, we talked English together for quite a while, though it was a rather one-sided conversation, for she could only understand Spanish and Maya. Pretty soon the other girls wanted to talk English, too, and grew so anxious that the dancing was entirely suspended. As there were only three of us, and not enough to go round if but one young lady were assigned to each, it was proposed by the General that we make speeches in English. This was not so agreeable a method as taking each damsel separately and conversing to her in private; but we consented, and it fell to my lot to lead off. Now, not a mother's son, or daughter, of that assemblage could understand a syllable of anything but Spanish and Maya, and I am ashamed to confess that I presumed upon their ignorance in a way that was not fair. I recited, "The boy stood on the burning deck"; and when the Consul assured them it was a beautiful English poem, my own composition, they believed him, and applauded furiously. Then the Consul and John made speeches, the former passing off something of Daniel Webster's as an original oration, and when we were through it was midnight. Refreshments were then brought in, and, after toasting the bright eyes, etc. of the Yucatecas, we all departed for our respective dwellings.

On the morrow the General insisted upon going with us to the end of our journey, and so had his private volan hitched up, and about nine o'clock we reached our destination. In this town of Timax (pronounced Teemash) we found the only American in this section, in response to whose invitation we

had undertaken this sixty-mile ride. He was a naturalist, who, after spending some time in Cuba, had now been two years or more in Yucatan. Tired of living entirely in the woods, where he had collected every known bug, bird, and beast, he had at last settled in this remote town, and was now practising as a physician. As he was the only one in these parts, he had a very profitable practice, though his only authority was a "Warren's Household Physician." In truth, his entire curriculum embraced no more than he had grubbed in a few months from between the lids of that book. Yet he was as successful as physicians who have had the advantage of colleges and medical schools, and could manage to kill almost as many as they could, even with their improved methods and medicines. He then had a practice of fifty dollars a week, and usually lost not more than half his patients. We did not find the Doctor in, but we took possession of his house and hammocks, and when he returned were very much at home. He was extremely delighted to see us, not having had a chance to speak his native tongue for several months.

He it was who was to conduct us to the haunts of the wild turkey, and we put all our guns in order, and were anxious to start at once. The report of a cannon startled us and made our cheeks turn pale, for that was a signal that the indefatigable General had organized and ordered another ball. As it was to be given in our honor, we could not well avoid attending, and thus the turkey hunt must be postponed. This was to be a grand affair, — what the negroes would call a "dignity ball," — and the ladies who attended wore pure white, and were elegantly attired, while the gentlemen were in faultless evening dress. The *jefe politico*, or mayor of the town, had all the streets swept and cleaned, and the *Casa Municipal* decorated, and sent us a courteous invitation to attend, couched in elegant Spanish. A great crowd of Mestizos and Mestizas surrounded the side and two ends of the corridor, and gazed upon the aristocratic dancers with whom they were not allowed to mingle. The old General excited our curiosity by not appearing during the afternoon and early evening, but towards nine o'clock he

came out "fresh as a daisy," saying he had been sleeping, and at once marched on to the floor, demanded the prettiest girl there for a partner, got her, and led the dance. The ball ended at one o'clock in the morning, and then the General saw us home, and kept our medical friend up all night, during which time he severely punished nineteen bottles of beer, one after the other. "To-night," said he, as we parted from him at dawn, "you're going to see something; I'm going to get up the grandest fandango 'Timax ever had." Hearing this, we despaired of our turkey hunt entirely, as we were obliged to return to Merida two days later, or lose the steamer of that week for Mexico.

The General was as good as his word. At dark the *musicos* —musicians— came for us, headed by our friend, whom all the Indians and Mestizos of that section blindly worshipped. The *musicos* were clad in cotton drawers and shirts only, with high-crowned straw hats; but they played as sweetly as if all were graduates from a musical college, and cost only fifty cents a head. The soul of the native-born Mexican and Yucateco takes as naturally to music as a woodchuck to clover; he twangs the guitar and blows the dulcet horn as perfectly as he dances, and he commences both immediately he leaves the cradle. The President and Chief Judge carried round some of the invitations. When we reached the *Casa* the General was seated in his robe of state,—a flowing *camisa*,—and smiled benignantly over everybody and everything. The same dazzling array of beautiful, jewel-bedecked Mestiza girls beamed upon us this evening as at the first *baile*, and soon all my friends were busy filling their books for the dances. There was no prescribed style of dress for the men: some wore their linen outside, fluttering in the evening air, some wore it inside, and some of the more aristocratic even wore coats, but all wore their hats.

Unobserved, in a corner, I was watching the strange costumes with keen relish, when the sharp eye of the General espied me, from his chair of state, beneath his own portrait draped in Mexican colors. "Hi, Señor Federico! why are you not dancing?"

"Señor General, I don't know how."

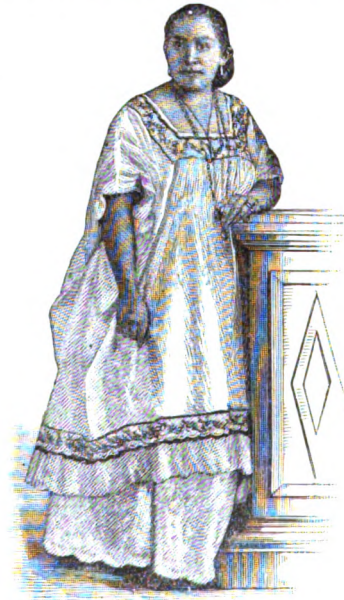
"Yes you do; you've got to dance, any way." With that he approached me, and, when I tried to dart through the crowd, caught and led me sternly back. "Here," beckoning to a lovely girl, "come, my darling, and dance with *el señor extranjero*."

The girl came and stood in front of me.

"That is my niece, the prettiest girl in the room, and the best dancer in the *canton*. Take her, now, and the Lord help you."

My explanations and protestations that I never danced were of no avail. He only repeated, "There's my niece; look at her!"

True enough, there she was, waiting for me to take her out. O, she was a handsome girl! with regular features, shapely shoulders, and hung all around with gold ornaments. Though she could not understand a word of my language, she must have seen that I did not want to dance with her; but when the music struck up she merely smiled, and said, in the sweetest of tones, "*Vamonos!*"



"THE PRETTIEST GIRL IN THE ROOM."

*Vamonos*<sup>1</sup> means "Come along!" but I would not go. Perplexed and confused, I stood there trying to frame an adequate answer from a somewhat limited Spanish vocabulary. At last I had it. "*Señorita*," I began, "*yo no sé* this kind of a dance, you see; it's all Greek to me. A Virginia reel, now, or a sailor's hornpipe, for instance; *pero este baile* —"

<sup>1</sup> *Vamonos* is purely colloquial, answering to the imperative of the verb *Ir*.



That precious sentence of Hispano-English was never finished, for she advanced at that, seized me about the waist, and said, in a decided sort of manner, "*Vamonos!*" — and I went.

Well, that young lady sailed all about me, like a swan. While I hopped up and down, stepped on her skirt, and trod on her toes, she remained as serene as a summer sky, pulled me this way and that, whirled me round and round till I was giddy, and ended by flinging me into a seat; while the whole audience, who had remained thunder-struck with awe and amazement at my war-dance, burst into loud cries of "*Viva Americano!*"

The girls sat ranged all along the wall, and waited till a caballero waltzed up to them and snatched one away. That was considered the proper thing to do, — when you saw a girl you wanted, to go up and lift her off her seat. Seeing that I was slow in coming forward, they reversed the order of things, and, before I was well aware, I was spinning away with another lady. One of the dances was the *toro*, or bull-dance; and another, the *sopilote*, or turkey-buzzard dance, in which a man and woman take the floor, each with a handkerchief, and go through a very extraordinary performance.

About midnight the Doctor looked in, on his way to visit a dying patient, and, wishing to see a new phase of native life, I went with him. Entering the thatched pole-hut of a poor Indian, we found ourselves in a dark room, feebly lighted by a small candle. It was a decided contrast to the bright ball-room, this gloomy and miserable hut, the abode of poverty and pain. In a hammock lay an Indian woman, the death-damp already gathering on her forehead, and a group of other women kneeling despairingly before a picture of the Virgin. Three hammocks hung from the smoke-blackened rafters, and these, with a few rude cooking utensils, were all the furniture of this cheerless abode.

The Doctor told them of her condition, and the information was communicated to the dying one, who changed neither position nor expression. Doubtless, she was glad to escape from a life that offered nothing but drudgery and toil; for these Indians have no fear of death, always welcoming



it, and rejoicing rather than mourning over the departure of a friend.

Out in the night air it was cool, bright, and pleasant, for a norther had just passed over. As we reached the corridor, the ball was just breaking up, and toasts were being drunk, to Mexico and the United States, to the señoritas and ourselves. Good feeling pervaded us all, and we parted from these kind and unsophisticated people with great regret, the band of musicos escorting us to the Doctor's house with lively music, and amid *vivas* for the two republics.



A YUCATAN CUISINE.

## VII.

### IN THE LOGWOOD FORESTS.

AFTER the last ball, the good General insisted upon staying and ascertaining the quality of the remainder of the Doctor's three dozen of beer; and at three A. M., seeing that it was likely to be an all-night session, I crept into the kitchen and took possession of one of the hammocks. This kitchen was the usual structure devoted to that use in Yucatan, of loose poles driven into the ground, forming a square pen, topped by a roof of thatch. Lorenzo Acosta, who owned the house the Doctor hired, and who piloted me to this retreat, had a rancho in the logwood district, which he invited me to visit, promising plenty of flamingoes and wild turkeys. We were to start early in the morning, before the Consul and John would be stirring, and, as the ride was to be a long one, had made good our escape from the General in order to gain a few hours' sleep. Two old women and a boy occupied this apartment, but the latter was unceremoniously ejected from one of the hammocks, which Lorenzo and I appropriated.

Perhaps the reader is not acquainted with the Yucatan way of sleeping, two in a hammock, and I will proceed to enlighten him. As the first one lies down in the hammock, he carefully takes up only one half, measured longitudinally, leaving the remainder for his friend. This the latter occupies, with his feet toward and parallel with the other's head, so that the two are packed "heads and points," like sardines. This leaves a kind of partition between the sleepers which effectually separates them; though, if one is inclined to kick in his sleep, the other must guard well his nose. In any event, a person at all fastidious might object to this style of packing, and prefer sleeping

family fashion, crosswise the hammock. But when one abandons himself to the guidance of a stranger, upon whose hospitality he is dependent, he must promptly check any qualms of his sensitive soul, and be duly grateful for what he can get.

It was so cold that I awoke several times during the brief space we occupied the hammock, and tried to remember that this was what they term the "hot" season. From the great flat surface of rock exposed to the rays of a powerful sun during the day in Yucatan, and the extremely rapid radiation at night, a degree of cold is sometimes reached that produces nocturnal freezing. During the hot, dry season, the cool nights are in most delightful contrast to the heated atmosphere of day, and induce sweet slumber, if one is properly guarded from extremes of temperature.

At about seven in the morning we were off for the logwood camp, by the way of the town of Ojilam. This inverted C, with which Ojilam is spelled, is a necessity arising from the retention of the ancient Maya names, and has the power of Ts, the word, consequently, being pronounced Tsilam. Don Alonzo could speak excellent Spanish, but what availed that to me when I was but in my first lessons in that language? He could not speak English, but he had a new "Ollendorff," and with this and my "conversation-book" in our hands, we rode through the cool woods, startling the birds with our blunders, and laughing at our many mistakes.

After an easy ride of four short leagues we arrived at Ojilam, entering its principal street between low, white-walled houses. Going to a house near the great square, we tied our horses, and I paid the man who brought my luggage two reals — twenty-five cents — for his services, and four reals for the horse, and he returned to Timax. We were provided with breakfast in a *tienda*, — a shop, — and while we were eating, the proprietor played the *Toro* for us on a guitar. After a siesta in a hammock, drowsily watching a girl of graceful figure, clad only in a snowy uipil, combing for an hour her abundant tresses, I was taken out and introduced to the Presidente as the "learned naturalist, author, and discoverer, Señor Don Federico."



MUSIC OF THE TORO.

By him I was promised seven Indians, with whom to make an excavation in the great mound. I should explain here, that Ojilam is celebrated for its great aboriginal mound, four hundred feet in length and fifty in height. This occupies one side of the great plaza of the town, and towers above the church and principal buildings, which were all built of stone from its ruins. It was visited by Stephens, and carelessly examined by him, a somewhat fanciful sketch of it being given in his second volume on Yucatan. He attached great importance to it as being the centre of a population at the time of the first visit of the Spaniards, quoting Herrera in confirmation that it was then "a fine Town, the Lord whereof was a youth of the Race of the Cheles, then a Christian, and a great Friend to Captain Francis de Montejo, who received and entertained them."

From the summit of this mound the country for leagues around can be seen, and the eye ranges over a vast extent of scrub, with no village in sight but the one about its base. A second mound lies north of this one, running east and west, while this larger and contiguous one has its longer axis north and south. The limits of these great tumuli once greatly exceeded their present area, as dressed stones can be seen in the streets, in

position, which run out into the scrub for a great distance. Under guidance of Don Juan we climbed the smaller mound, and some little boys commenced to throw out the dirt and stones from a small hole in the top. They soon brought out fragments of pottery and plaster, the former finely glazed and tinted, the plaster colored bright red, drab, and green, and all the tints fresh as if put on but yesterday. After the adult Indians arrived, more plaster was exhumed, and a room disclosed filled with *débris* from above. It proved to be arched, in a way similar to the "Akabná," at Aké. They opened it sufficiently to show its shape, but did not find any more pottery or plaster, which was evidently above and outside the building. So I caused the earth to be removed from the top, and soon revealed great pieces of stucco, showing bright colors and elaborate ornamentation and design; but not enough to satisfy me, though I was obliged to desist digging before finding much, as the sun was setting. Its last rays shone directly into the chamber we had opened. Half the men and boys of the village were gathered by this time, and all assisted eagerly at the work, even the Presidente and the schoolmaster. I paid the Indians a real apiece, and the boys a medio, and all were delighted. The ruins of a building upon this mound would seem to indicate the use of these vast accumulations of earth as foundations for palaces or temples. In a flat country, like Yucatan, it would be necessary to elevate the public buildings in this manner in order that they could be seen from a distance. Though the ruinous state of the structure was so complete that no satisfactory outline could be obtained, its stones covering all sides of the mound, and large trees and agaves growing upon the summit, yet it seemed to have been composed of successive platforms, each one covered with a thick layer of cement or plaster. Stephens did not visit it, but states that the padre, a young man of thirty (when he was there, forty years ago), remembered when a building still remained "with open doorways, pillars in them, and a corridor all around," and was called *El Castillo*, — the castle.

It should be remembered that Otilam, though leagues away, is the only port of the large town of Izamal, where there

is an immense mound and a gigantic sculptured head, and a road leads straight from the coast, through Timax, to that aboriginal city.

Alonzo and I occupied a hammock in a large, empty building belonging to Don Juan, and slept again *à la Yucateca*, the feet of each in close proximity to the other's head, which is almost as compact a style as that denominated "spoon fashion." We were to start at four the next morning, but did not rise till five; and though I expected to get on our journey by sunrise, it was nine o'clock before we left the town. This might have been expected, for the day before it was to have been *muy temprano*, — very early, — and we left Timax three hours behind time. No one was stirring in the plaza, but a baker's shop was open, with the usual knot of men in cotton pants, shivering in their sarapes; and here we got a cup of chocolate. While waiting for my horse, we visited the old churchyard, a walled-off corner, with orange trees in it. It must have been formerly used as a cemetery, for there were heaps of boxes — wine cases, brandy and soap boxes — full of dead men's bones; and in a recess in the church wall were arm and leg bones, and grinning skulls, that seemed inclined to dispute our entrance. Don Juan took us to see an old stone, with a strange inscription on it: probably, as he said, the work of Indians under Spanish direction; and he held up a wooden cross while we removed from it the boxes of bones.

Having thus been cheerfully fortified for the journey, I thought Alonzo would start; but he lingered here and there, buying meat and bread, till eight o'clock; then we mounted our horses, bade our friends "*Adios*," and rode down the street to a hut, where he asked for breakfast. This consumed another hour, though the Mestiza girl worked hard to prepare it for us, being hindered by the admiring and amorous Alonzo, who haunted the kitchen, teasing the pretty cook for a caress. Her mother, a wrinkled old lady, learning that I could not speak Spanish, pulled a dolorous countenance and called me *pobrecito*, — poor little fellow, — and wanted to know where in the world I lived, that the people could not speak "Castellano."

We finally got fairly astride our steeds at the cross of San José, near a big ceibo tree, and turned into a narrow trail that was, its whole length, very stony, or *muy pedregoso*. This led into the forest forming part of the belt that lines the eastern and northern coasts of Yucatan, the trees gradually increasing in size, and becoming more open as we advanced. Birds grew more numerous, especially the queer bird called the road-runner, — *el corre-camino*, — a species of cuckoo, or the chaparral cock. We had to walk our horses, the road was so slippery; very little soil covered the coral rock, which was full of holes, caves, and cenotes, nearly all leading to water. At noon we halted at a small cenote, where there was an opening in the rock, down which our Indian went, and got a calabash full of pure water. A team of pack mules came up just then, and their owner sat down with us and joined in a *refresco Yucateco*. Into the calabash of water Alonzo put a big ball of *atole*, or mixture of corn, procured of the Mestiza in the morning, and stirred it up with his fingers. When of proper consistency it was passed to me, and, drinking of it, I found it sweet and refreshing. This is prepared by the women, of maize, spiced and sweetened, and is in universal use in Yucatan and Southern Mexico, forming, with water, a pleasant and strengthening drink. We drank all around from the same calabash, then mounted and went on again. The great woods were open at times, sweet, clean, and inviting, and the leaves lay on the ground as in autumn in the North; but I had no relish for this sight, desiring to reach the end of a ride that promised to be interminable.

Late in the afternoon, we reached a change in the dry, hot road, an *aguada*, or small pond; and here, at a sign from Alonzo, I got off my horse and crept toward the water with my gun. Through the bushes I saw a gallinule, a beautiful bird, which I shot, and immediately after another, that flew up at the report of the gun. These Alonzo secured by wading into the dark pool, notwithstanding he had sore feet, as our Indian, though bare-legged, refused to secure them. The aguada was deep, its surface well covered with lilies and water plants, and fringed with an abundance of dead snail shells.

My friend had hitherto ridden perched upon two packs of luggage, and I had used his horse, while the Indian carried a great load on his back, supported by a band passing across his forehead. We both dismounted here and pursued the rest



OUR INDIAN PORTER.

of our way on foot; and I shot a *chachalalka*, a kind of pheasant, and from a little gem of an aguada we put up three large ducks. The gallinules, Alonzo tells me, are *pajaros preciosos*, or very precious birds; and they are, indeed, a rare



species, and a valuable addition to my collection. The whole character of the forest changed after this; the aguadas were more frequent, and the entire country appeared as though at times submerged. Of this, in fact, my friend assured me, adding that, when he came here, in June, the place where he had his camp, now dry land, was entirely under water.

I was very weary when we at last reached a meadow, in which some horses were feeding, and was told that we were near the rancho. To my great surprise my friend's *rancho* — from the name of which I was led to expect a small farm — proved to be nothing more than a collection of four huts of palmetto leaves, merely roofs to shed the rain, with open ends and sides. They were on the southern rim of a lovely aguada, surrounded by palmetto and deciduous trees. A pile of logwood, thatched with leaves, a bath-house of palm leaves, and a leaf roof over some hollow logs that served as beehives, completed the establishment.

On the road we had met a train of mules, each with a great plank, fifteen feet long and two wide, lashed on each side, one end projecting beyond his ears, the other dragging on the ground. This is the only way in which Western Yucatan can get its timber, all the west and central portion being covered with scrub or second growth.

About twenty Indians and Mestizos, with bare bodies and legs, sandals, and great cutlasses, were lounging about as we rode in. Three Indian women and a comely Mestiza were busy about their household duties. Upon a large plank, three feet wide, supported on four legs, were two *metates*, with rollers, used for grinding corn for tortillas; and in addition to this there were a few tubs, a grindstone, and all the things necessary to a camp in the forest. From pole to pole, under the thatched roofs of the open huts, were stretched hammocks of Sisal hemp, and two great mosquito bars told their own tale of insects at night.

We rode into this logwood camp, and I was invited to a hammock, while they talked over news and business, for Alonzo had been gone some time. I noticed one man, a Mestizo, who

had an uneasy look, and one woman, a Mestiza, who was comely and had an anxious look, though a very sympathetic one,—as they say here, *muy simpatica*. Of the other women, one was fat and restless, and the other old and honest. They all worked well, not intermitting their labors for a minute. Supper was soon ready. After the fashion of the country, we first washed our hands in a calabash, and five minutes later that same calabash was brought in full of water to drink. Poor Alonzo had but two bowls besides calabashes, for he was only camping, and had no knife, fork, or spoon; so I took my jack-knife, while they ate with fingers and tortillas. Tortillas and frijoles (beans) are the main stay of a Mexican cuisine. Upon the tortillas, as plates, you spread the beans, and with another corn cake, rolled up in shape of a spoon, you scoop in the frijoles. When the latter are finished, you eat the spoon, and then the plate, leaving no troublesome dishes to bother the cook.

Our companion was a Spaniard, lately from Europe, a pleasant, black-eyed young man, who was sent by a firm there to look after their interests in the logwood. There were no chairs, of course, and we sat in hammocks, while the food was placed on a box on a clean cloth. As we ate, more tortillas were brought, hot from the fire, handed to us on a cloth by the cook, and taken by us and clapped down on the table. Quite a pile was heaped up before we left, and these were taken and warmed over for the men. After eating, a calabash was passed around, full of water, for rinsing the mouth. The proper way is to fill the mouth with water, and, after inserting the finger and scrubbing the teeth, to spit it out. This custom prevails throughout Mexico, even among well-to-do people. Coffee and cigarettes then followed; the latter, in fact, were going all the time. By this time darkness had settled down, and some of the men retired to their hammocks. Though surrounded by strangers, and some with not very pleasant faces, I left all my arms outside the mosquito bar as I retired, conscious that they, as well as myself, were safe. Later in the season, in the highlands of Mexico, I would have sooner slept without my blanket than without my revolver;

for the Aztecs are as treacherous and faithless as the people of Yucatan are honest and true.

After a second coffee we all sought our hammocks, where Alonzo and I reclined, smoking and chatting. I was anxious to go on to the coast for flamingoes, but my host told me I could not,—that I was at his disposal; which remark rather irritated me, until he added, with a smile, "And I am at yours, also." I had got accustomed to this polite insincerity, however. On the way I asked him if the horse he rode was his, and he replied: "*Si, señor, y de usted, tambien,*"—"Yes, sir, and yours as well." After that I ventured but one more question of the kind, and that was when, in the house of the young lady who had prepared our breakfast, I asked if she was his sweetheart. The customary reply came readily to his lips: "*Si, amigo mio,* and yours also."

I fell asleep, as soon as the insects feasting on me, ticks, sand-flies, fleas, and chinchies, would permit, but soon awoke suddenly, conscious that Alonzo had darted out from under the mosquito bar and was in angry expostulation with the man with the evil eyes. This man, early in the evening, had gone raving to his hammock, and after crying there awhile he had come tearing out, and seized his wife,—the sympathetic one,—dragging her away from her work. She had submitted, though expecting a beating, merely glancing at her torn uipil; but one of the men jumped at him as he drew her along, and quieted him for a while. Now he had broken out afresh, threatening to kill Alonzo if he did not immediately pay him his wages, and brandishing a great machete furiously. Alonzo was in no wise frightened, but sprang at him like a jaguar, promising him a beating that would answer for his wages. And I have no doubt the Indian would have got it, though my friend is a little man, for in Ojilam he had flown at a man who talked insolently to him, slapped his face, and pounded him well, until he ceased from talking. So they had it out in talk, and piled fresh fuel on the fire as though they intended to be at it all night, making my hut as light as day. The fight ended, Alonzo quietly entered the mosquito bar, which was made large enough for

both our hammocks, and ordered coffee and cigarettes for two. When he had asked me to enter, he had said, in Maya, "*Kom in*," which is the equivalent in that language for "Come in." There are also other words similar in sound and signification to ours. In the morning, after coffee and cigarettes, we all went into the woods to inspect the logwood — the *palo tinto* or *palo de Campeche* — which the men had cut during Acosta's absence. It was then very hot, though the night had been freezing cold.

The wood they had cut lay in little heaps where they had felled the trees. It was trimmed of all the bark and white outer wood, and was in color from light red to dark purple. One of the men had a steelyard with him, and this was hung from a tree, and the wood, piled on a suspended platform, was weighed, four *arrobas*, or one hundred pounds, at a time. This was noted down, with the name of the man who cut it, and we passed on to the next, being engaged in this way several hours. The horses were then led up, and a load of four *arrobas* packed on each, and carried to the camp.

The logwood tree, *Hæmatoxylon Campechianum*, is found bordering all the great lagoons and a good portion of the sea-coast of Southern Mexico. Campeche especially — a name which this tree bears as its specific appellation — exports vast quantities. It is a tree of medium size and peculiar appearance, attaining a height of twenty or thirty feet. The trunk is gnarled and full of cavities, and separates a short distance above the ground; the leaves are pinnated, the flowers small and yellowish, hanging in bunches from the ends of the branches. The bark is dark, while the sap-wood is yellowish, and the heart, the valuable portion, deep red. The logwood forests are nearly all flooded in the rainy season, though the tree is found in the hills as well as on the plains. It is in the dry season that the cutting begins, and in the rainy season the wood is floated to the *embarcaderos*, or wharves, on the rivers and lagoons, and thence to the ports to be laden in foreign vessels.

Many other valuable woods are found in Yucatan, including the mastic (*Pistacia lentiscus*), and dye-woods and dyeing

plants, such as the archil (*Rocella tinctoria*) and madder (*Rubia tinctorium*).

The sun was blazing hot, butterflies played about us, birds sang in the thin-foliaged trees, and a native quail, or *faisan*, got up at intervals. We saw one deer, *venado*, and one turkey, *pavo del monte*, but not near enough for a fair shot. There were many caves and depressions in the limestone surface, with water in them, looking cool and inviting for a bath; but numerous adders swimming across the water rendered them less attractive. Thousands of dead snails lay in windrows, but not a live one was to be found, though I searched diligently under the dead logs and leaves.

The logwood was brought into camp and stacked, whence it will be carried to the port of Ojilam and shipped. There seem to be vast quantities of it, but it is in remote sections, where it is difficult and expensive to get it out. As we returned to camp, my friend was taken with cramp in the stomach, and howled and cried, and the man with whom he had quarrelled in the morning was the first to hasten to his aid. I suspected then it was but a ruse to bring about a change of sentiment through sympathy. In the evening Alonzo brought out a big bag of silver which he had brought to pay the men with, and proceeded to devote it to that purpose. I admired the pluck of my little friend, that would not let him be browbeaten into paying it out before he was ready, though in apparent danger from the Indian with the bad-looking eyes. We walked out in the cool of the evening toward the aguadas, or ponds; the birds were still, and a quiet brooded over the lonely place, except for the cries of the gallinules in the marsh, one of which Alonzo shot, and waded into the water waist-deep to secure it. Sometimes the simplest thing will awaken thoughts of home when in a strange country where the scenery is different; and mine were carried back to the North by the sight of a group of cat-tail flags, growing as in Northern meadows.

The industry of the Indian women of Yucatan is a matter of wonder. From long before daylight till late at night, even after we had retired to our rest, they were toiling at the metates. It

is the most laborious of occupations, to work the stone roller over a smooth slab of stone all day long. I saw two girls in Timax who worked twelve hours a day at the metates, grinding castor beans, for which they received *eighteen cents* per day. Our women were kept employed unusually late that night, in cooking up a store of tortillas for our journey next day, for we were to go to the coast for flamingoes.



LA TORTILLERA.

## VIII.

### NORTH COAST OF YUCATAN.

THE glassy surface of the aguada, soon after dawn, reflected the rosy hues of the sky, the sun crept slowly up, dissipating the coolness of the night, and before seven it was very hot. The sand-flies came out and enlivened us, while the birds commenced their cries. I dressed and went out. Coffee was ready, and cigarettes, and, after taking breakfast, we were ready to start for the coast. We were to have started *muy temprano*, — very early, — but the sun climbed higher and higher, and still the horses were munching their corn, and my friend still unprepared. It is always *mañana* — to-morrow — in this country; *mañana temprano*, early to-morrow; but it is ever *mañana*, and never *temprano*. The people lose the best hours of morning, and work in the heat of the day.

Across the aguada there was a strange bird, called the *marinero*, or sailor, that uttered a succession of harsh cries for hours. The woods were full of birds of certain species, such as orioles, flycatchers, blackbirds, doves, and a host of others. I shot a very beautiful trogon, with a yellow breast, and parrots were crying out all the time. *Temprano* meant ten o'clock, when the sun nearly blistered our backs; yet even then Alonzo wanted to know if I would not like to wait till later.

Many of the trees that composed the wood we first entered supported great nests of the white ants, which looked at a little distance like black bears. We passed through a broad area covered with wild *henequen*, showing whence the plants come with which the plantations are stocked. Near some lovely aguadas was a new rancho, with a nice-looking girl preparing

tortillas; and some hundred rods beyond we saw an Indian mound of shells. An hour later I saw a man-of-war bird (*Tachypetes aquila*), and felt that, from this sign, the sea could not be far off; nor was I mistaken, for we soon struck a sandy plain with small salt ponds, and espied the great lagoon that connects with the sea.

Mangroves and stunted trees had been features of the landscape thus far, but a mound of green coco palms now rose up and relieved the monotony. This was the *cerro*, or hill, we were looking for, a shell-heap made by the ancient Indians, covered and surrounded with a few hundred coco palms. Here were two small thatched and wattled huts, dilapidated and dirty, within which were two Indian women cooking some fish. They had nothing else except a little corn; but they brought a great fish, called *lisa*, which had been broiled on the coals in its own fat, and this was delicious. It was, as it lay split open, nearly two inches thick, and we ate and relished exceedingly great flakes of it. These women had never seen a spoon, table-knife, or fork; and, as we had none with us, we used our fingers and tortillas, each one taking his turn at the fish and gravy. Fortunately, we had hundreds of coco nuts at hand, and were not obliged to drink the dirty coffee they boiled for us, but had, instead, the refreshing water of the cocos. A man came along as we finished our cigarettes, and we engaged him to take us in his boat to a point up the lagoon where there were, according to him, "*muchos flamingos*." The *cerro* is at a point where the lagoon meets the sea, called Boca de Dilam and Puntas Arenas, or point of sand. There are long sand-bars and shoals, and naturally the fish congregate by millions, and the sea-birds by thousands. A wall of mangroves comes down to the border of the lagoon, and beyond the sand point is the open ocean. Flocks of pelicans, sea-gulls, terns, cormorants, peeps, plover, snipe, herons, egrets, and spoonbills were flying, wading, and swimming, in and above the water. Here, it is said, the flamingoes come by hundreds on the bar, about a gunshot from the huts among the palms; but they were not there then,—they would come that night, or *mañana*.



The man poled the boat up the lagoon, disturbing hundreds of snipe and sandpipers, to a point where the stream narrowed, and where the mangroves reached even to the water's edge, forming solid green walls, with the placid water between them. These trees were dotted with white herons and cormorants, and at a place where there was a spring, — a spring of fresh water<sup>1</sup> bubbling up in this salt water lagoon, — we put up a hundred ducks and two dozen spoonbills (*Platalea ajaja*) which were roosting on the trees.

Having shot some of these birds we tried to land, but the mud was so soft, and we sank so deep, that it was impossible, and we were obliged to leave them. Quitting the main channel, we entered a narrow water lane, where many egrets and night-herons, with broad boat-bills, flapped across our bows. The mangroves were in bloom, the small concealed flower being hardly perceptible. At last we reached the point where the flamingoes ought to have been, but where they were not, — a broad mud flat, where they always had fed till that day. Disappointed, we turned the boat about, after causing it to be pushed over the mud as far as possible, and returned.

The sun was down then, and the water smoother, and all the little water birds and the greater ibis and herons were going to roost, some on the sand-bars, others on the trees. Our dinner, when we reached the hut, was the same as our breakfast, — a large broiled fish, laid out on a palmetto fan, which we ate by the light of an attenuated candle, stuck near by on a *metate* table. The interior of the hut was black with smoke, dried fish were stuck up all about, nets and other paraphernalia of a fisher's hut hung in the corners, and one end was filled by a great pile

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the reader may recall the accounts given of the wonderful fresh-water spring in the Atlantic, off St. Augustine, on the Florida coast, known forty years ago. "On the northern coast of Yucatan," says Humboldt, "at the mouth of the Rio Lagartos, four hundred metres from the shore, springs of fresh water spout up from amidst the salt water. It is probable that from some strong hydrostatical pressure the fresh water, after bursting through the banks of calcareous rocks between the clefts of which it had flowed, rises above the level of the salt water." Florida and Yucatan are of similar geological formation; hence the appearance of these springs on the coasts of both peninsulas.

of coco nuts. Into the six hammocks, hung side by side in the centre, ten people stowed themselves as night came on, though Alonzo and I, in virtue of our silver, had a single one each. I slept uneasily, because they told me the flamingoes would come in the night, and we must get up at moonrise and hunt them. Insects of some kind — I could not tell what, nor how many, save that I knew they were numerous and sanguinary — were crawling over me all night. The hammock next me was occupied by an old woman with two babies, and she, with the men and boys on either side, was smoking and spitting all night. It was very dark, and the wind was howling through the spaces of the hut during all those weary hours, and in the morning there was a perfect "norther," and the long leaves of the coco palms were lashing their trunks in fury. At sunset the Indians told us the flamingoes would come at midnight, then at dawn, and when daylight came they were on an island two leagues off, and would appear *mañana*. When I heard this last, I knew the case was hopeless, and prepared to depart. The only sight of flamingoes we obtained was early in the morning, when two long lines flapped over the water far at sea, distinguishable miles away by their bright color.

Forty years ago, Mr. Stephens and Dr. Cabot had similar fortune to mine in this same locality, having been lured here from the port of Ojilam by the stories told them of the abundance of ibis and flamingoes, and having still returned empty-handed. Then, as now, Puntas Arenas was simply a station for fishermen, and had but a single hut. I perfectly agree with the distinguished traveller, that, "for mere sporting, such a ground is not often seen, and the idea of a shooting lodge, or rather hut, on the shores of Punta Arenas for a few months in the season, presented itself almost as attractively as that of exploring ruined cities."

Stephens was then on his way back from an extended exploration of the ruins on the island of Cozumel and the east coast of the peninsula; and perhaps, as this is the nearest point we shall reach in that direction, it will be well to interpolate a short description of that portion of Yucatan. The first point at which

the Spaniards under Cordova touched upon the then unknown kingdom of Mexico was at its northeastern extremity, now called Cape Catoche. An Indian chief invited them ashore, saying, "*Con-escotoch*," which signifies, "Come to our town"; and from this he gave it the name of Punta de Cotoche. It is situated in latitude  $21^{\circ} 34'$  North, longitude  $86^{\circ} 57' 51''$  West.

"It was determined by us to accept the invitation," says the old chronicler, "observing the proper precaution of going all in a body, and by one embarkation, as we perceived the shore to be lined with Indians." They were attacked by these, their first acquaintances of the new country, and fifteen of the company wounded. "These warriors were armed with thick coats of cotton, and carried, besides their bows and arrows, lances, shields, and slings; they also wore ornaments of feathers on their heads. . . . Near the place of this ambushade were three buildings of lime and stone, wherein were idols of clay, with diabolical countenances, and several wooden chests, which contained similar idols but smaller, some vessels, three diadems, and some imitations of birds and fishes in alloyed gold. The buildings of lime and stone, and the gold, gave us a high idea of the country we had discovered. On our return to the shore we had the satisfaction to find that, while we were fighting, our chaplain, Gonzales, had taken care of the chests and their contents, which he had, with the assistance of two Indians of Cuba, brought off safely to our ships. Having re-embarked, we proceeded as before, coasting to the westward."

The island of Cozumel was discovered the next year, 1518, on the voyage of Grijalva, and for it Cortés set sail in 1519. "There was," says Bernal Diaz, "on the island of Cozumel a temple, and some hideous idols, to which all the Indians of the neighboring districts used to go frequently in solemn procession." These idols Cortés and his companions cast down, and substituted the cross in their place, which the Indians finally consented to accept. Here they heard of two Spaniards in captivity among the Indians, one of whom they rescued, and who proved of great service afterwards as an interpreter.

North of the great island of Cozumel is Isla Mujeres, about

six miles from the coast, five or six miles in length by half a mile wide. Here some of the sailors with Cortés went on shore, and found in the town, near by, four temples, the idols in which represented human female figures of large size, for which reason they named this place Punta de las Mujeres, or Women's Cape.



TERRA-COTTA FIGURE.

What Stephens, in 1842, did for Isla Mujeres and Cozumel, in a superficial manner, the archæologist Dr. Le Plongeon has since done more thoroughly and satisfactorily. In a communication, printed in 1878, he gives a complete survey (the first) of the Isla Mujeres, locating the ancient buildings, the shrine, or temple, formerly containing the idols spoken of, and the "altar." A valuable discovery by the Doctor was made there of a terra-cotta female figure, which had formed the front

of a *brasero*, or incense-burner. It was of excellent workmanship, and valuable, not only from this fact, but owing to the extreme rarity of works of the ceramic art on and near the peninsula of Yucatan.

He carefully surveyed the ruins, and made photographs of the "temple," which shows that it has suffered from the hand

of time since the visit of Stephens. He, however, locates it at the south end of the island, while Stephens erroneously places it at the north. The building is of stone, twenty-eight feet long and fifteen deep; the interior is divided into two corridors, the ceiling has the triangular arch, and it gives evidence of being the work of the builders on the mainland. Portions of the structure have been used for building purposes, but to-day, says the Doctor, the people obtain stone from a large ruined city on the mainland opposite Mujeres, where they go with fear and trembling, lest they should meet with Indians from Tulum, and be made prisoners. "A very happy confirmation of the statement of Diaz that these people burned incense was made here. Desiring to varnish some negatives, in order to carry them safely home, I put some live coals in the bottom of the incense burner, and entered the shrine to be protected from the wind; when lo! a slight vapor arose from among the coals, and a sweet, delicious perfume filled again the antique shrine as in the days of its splendor, when the devotees and pilgrims from afar used to make their offerings, and burn the mixture, carefully prepared, of storax, copal, and other aromatic resins, on the altar of the goddess."

The ancient inhabitants of Yucatan and the coasts of Mexico made great use of the gums of storax, and copal as incense.

Says the chronicler of Grijalva's expedition (1517), speaking of their visit to the temple in Cozumel, "While they were at the top of the tower an old Indian put in a vase with very odoriferous perfumes, which seemed of storax; he burned many perfumes before the idols which were in the tower, and sang in a loud voice a song, which was always in the same tune."

An historian of Yucatan, Landa, says: "The very travellers carried incense with them in a small dish. At night, wherever they arrived, they placed together three small stones, depositing upon them grains of incense."

The Spaniards, in their first voyages to these coasts, found it the custom to fumigate all strangers, and burn odorous gums before the idols in the temples. One of the complaints of an early voyager was against this prevailing custom, for he was

often nearly choked by the fumes, odoriferous though they were. This was not done, probably, to kill any germ of infectious disease which the stranger might have about him, but as a token of respect. The soldiers of Cortés were at first much flattered, because they fancied themselves saluted as gods by this token of homage. In the churches, at the present day, native gums are burned in the censers. This discovery, on the coast of



FRONT OF "INCENSE BURNER."

Yucatan and British Honduras, of *braseros*, or incense burners, confirms the truth of those statements of the historians.

The northern and eastern shores, especially the latter, are dotted with ruins; a cordon of ruined villages, cities, temples, and palaces is drawn along the coast. None more interesting has been described than the city of Tulum, which Stephens identifies, with much show of reason in his support, with the

great cities of lime and stone seen by the first Spanish visitors. Here he found a grand "castle" and extensive buildings, some with roofs of beams still supporting a crust of mortar. Buried in a dense forest, he found sculptured stones, altars, watch-towers, paintings, stucco-work, and buildings of a beautiful style of architecture. The whole northeastern portion of Yucatan is a wilderness, a section of country that was once teeming with people, and full of populous cities.

From this long detour northward, let us return once more to Puntas Arenas, where I left my friend Alonzo ready to renew the search for flamingoes. He was determined to find some, and to put me within gunshot of them, even if we had to go to the Rio Lagartos, fifteen leagues away; for he had promised the Consul he would. But I was determined to leave for Otilam and civilization, as by another day's delay I might miss the steamer down the coast, and be hindered another week in my journey to Mexico. Finding me obdurate, he yielded gracefully, and to his already numerous favors added the crowning one of giving me his horse to ride, while he returned to the rancho. Then he embraced and patted me on the back, commended me to the old Indian who had been our guide, and started on his walk of three leagues to the rancho, while I turned his horse's head westward, and we parted to meet no more.

My guide, a withered and wrinkled old man, mounted astride a little stallion, between two packs, and his legs hanging down by the horse's neck, led the way. I thought my misfortunes ended; but this was an ill-starred trip, for we had not been ten minutes on the trail before my horse got stuck in the soft mud of the shore, and, rearing up, fell over on me, pinning one leg in the soft ooze. How I escaped from the wildly-floundering animal is something I do not understand to this day; but I remember scrambling over the mud sidewise like a crab, on hands and knees, and afterward picking up cartridges, silver, and a broken watch-chain, while my guide captured the horse. After being scraped, I again mounted, experiencing much trouble after this, for the horse, made fearful by his fall, snorted and fell to trembling at every soft place in the sand. At the frequent sloughs I was obliged to dismount

and pound the horse with the branch of a tree from behind, while the old Indian dragged him ahead from in front. There were two long leagues of this kind of travelling, and we were much rejoiced when some straggling huts announced the approach to the seaport of Oïlam. A large portion of the way was through a mangrove forest, where I had good opportunities for studying this peculiar tree, noticing how it sent out and down its aerial roots for a foothold in the water and at the border of the sea, and the entire absence of such adventitious shoots back a little distance on firm land.

At the Puerta — a collection of thatched houses and a half-completed church — we sought for breakfast, and, seeing a fine-looking girl in a doorway, with a tray of fruit on her head, I asked if we could get it there. She said yes, and gave me some tortillas and frijoles; but the table was destitute of plate, knife, or spoon, though it was clean. After breakfast I reclined in a hammock in an inner room, while the young girl swung in another a few feet distant, with a plump babe of a year or so in her lap. She was hardly fourteen, large and finely formed, with lovely oval face, and large dark eyes. She looked so young and childlike, despite her maturity and maternity, that I could hardly believe her the mother of such a bouncing child, and asked if it were really hers. "*Si, señor,*" she answered, slowly raising the lashes from her beautiful eyes, "*es mio,*" — "it is mine," — and she added, with a charming frankness that astonished me, "And yours too if you will accept it." I had intended saying something neat in compliment before I got this answer, but such an excess of politeness as an offer of a joint interest in a child I had never seen before that hour fairly overwhelmed me, and I silently withdrew, settled my bill, mounted, and rode away.

The two leagues between the port and Oïlam proper were soon gone over, and I slept that night in the *casa* of Don Juan *el viejo*, — of Mr. John the old man. "*Mañana temprano*" was the order I gave my Indian for the morrow, and for a wonder he appeared at daylight. It rained at intervals as we rode towards Timax, but the air was pure, and sweet with the odors



of flowers, and the many birds in the thickets enlivened our journey, so that we arrived at our destination without fatigue.

I was in season to go the rounds with the Doctor among his patients of the village, and was pleased to find that he had lost but three during my absence, and had only two in a critical condition. One man, who had been expected to die of a protracted debauch, the Doctor had physicked in vain, and this morning he mixed up some powerful calomel pills, quietly remarking, "If these don't do the business, that Indian will pass in his checks before noon." They did not kill him, and my friend thereby added another laurel to his wreath, and had another convalescent to extend his fame as a *medico*. I could not refrain from reciting those classic lines of the poet:—

"They prepared some pills of hydrargyrum,  
And their patient travelled to kingdom come."

The last day of my stay the doctor-naturalist arranged for a grand *poo*, or turkey hunt, and early in the morning, after giving his patients some quieting medicines, we galloped out to a rancho, ten miles distant. It was almost entirely abandoned, being solely in charge of Indians. The *mayoral*, or head man, had on, like all the rest, simply a breech-cloth, hat, and sandals, and carried a machete, or great knife. His skin was hard, brown, and polished. These poor people had nothing to eat except roots from the woods and what animals they could kill. The corn crop of this year had failed, and half the population of Eastern Yucatan were subsisting on roots, small game, lizards, and snakes. Speculators had got control of American corn, and many people were starving in consequence, though every steamer from the United States was bringing vast quantities to Progreso, and notwithstanding the fact that in many of the interior States of Mexico corn was selling at twenty cents per bushel.

We waited an hour under a big ceibo tree, while an Indian knocked down some coco nuts, and brought us pawpaw fruits as large as pumpkins, which tasted like muskmelons. Then we were taken across a large *milpa*, or cornfield, in the blazing sun,

and posted in a wood, while our Indians ranged about to beat up the game. In the dry, dead woods, which in this dry season much resemble our Northern forests in autumn, we waited for hours. My only visitors were a brown and golden humming-bird, a chachalaka, and some inquisitive blue-jays; but the



FRUIT-SELLER OF YUCATAN.

Doctor got a shot at a flying gobbler, which escaped; and that ended the hunt. We walked back to the rancho in the heat, covered with garrapatas, ticks that are so small as to be hardly visible, yet bite like red ants. In the evening we strolled through the town, seeing many pretty faces, as at that time the ladies appear, and sit in their doorways, and chat and smoke.

The next morning the Indians brought in three turkeys, the result of our inciting them to hunt for them, and among them was one fine old gobbler,

whose plumage was resplendent with sheen of polished copper and gold, who had two buckshot through the lungs. This was undoubtedly the one the Doctor had shot, and which the wily Indians had tracked to its hiding-place after our departure. This magnificent bird, representing the finest of his race, the Doctor presented to me as a souvenir of the occasion; his assistant aided me in skinning and preserving it, and it is now

in the fine collection of Wheaton Seminary, at Norton, Massachusetts. My friend had a "corner" on these ocellated turkeys, having killed and bought over one hundred. All were shipped to Paris, to a large dealer in bird skins, who supplied the museums of Europe. Never before had so many been sent to the museums, though even now there are not a dozen in the United States.

Since my departure, the Doctor has returned to his home in the North. If he can be prevailed upon to prepare his adventures for publication, the record of his three years' sojourn in the solitary forests of Yucatan, the world will be delighted with the richest mine of sylvan and aboriginal lore ever opened to the public.

The events above narrated occurred in 1881. Two years later, I unexpectedly met my friend in New Mexico, and passed a week with him in a cosy log cabin which he had erected in a cañon, nine miles above the ancient city of Santa Fé. There I saw, a thousand miles distant from their habitat, many of the animals (in skins and feathers) which we had collected in the wilds of Yucatan; I slept in the same hammock, and upon the same tiger-skin; and our talk, as we lay awake at night, was almost exclusively of the historic peninsula and its delightful inhabitants.

The *correo*, or mail-coach, left at two in the afternoon for Merida, with myself and two Yucatecos as passengers. In learning that they were Yucatecos I naturally inferred that they were gentlemen, as they were, and that they would linger at every possible point on the road, which they did, first at a *fiesta*, where there had been a bull-fight, *corrida de toros*, and then at a dance. We reached the town house of the General just in time for dinner, stayed with him an hour or two, parted from him with an affectionate embrace, and arrived at Motul at dark. Here my companions ordered supper, refusing to let me pay for it, or share in the expense, saying that I was a stranger and their companion, and that it was their duty to see me through.

We changed mules at Motul, and galloped nearly the whole

distance to Merida, stopping now and then to stretch our limbs and smoke. As there were four of us, including the driver, the volan was full. There was no room for reclining, and we were cramped in unnatural positions throughout the long twenty leagues. It was one o'clock in the morning, by the dim light of a waning moon, that we entered the suburbs of the capital, and waked the echoes of the silent streets by driving furiously to the Plaza.



MAYA MARKET-WOMAN.

· B O O K · II.



CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN MEXICO.

“THOU Italy of the Occident !  
Land of flowers and summer climes,  
Of holy priests and horrid crimes ;  
Land of the cactus and sweet cocoa ;  
Richer than all the Orient  
In gold and glory, in want and woe,  
In self-denial, in days misspent,  
In truth and treason, in good and guilt,  
In ivied ruins and altars low,  
In battered walls and blood misspilt ;  
Glorious, gory Mexico !”

## IX.

### PALENQUE AND THE PHANTOM CITY.

**A**S part and portion of the great republic of Mexico, the distant province of Yucatan deserves more than the mere mention it usually gets from passing travellers; but, lying as it does on the way between two great countries whose centres are eagerly sought, it is generally passed by. Differing essentially from the dominant States in everything relating to soil, agriculture, aspect of surface, and even the character and manners of its people, it merits a volume by itself, instead of these few chapters. Passing in review the forty days passed in Yucatan, I confess myself fairly in love with its people. This was the sentiment with which I left its territory, and which time and subsequent experiences have only strengthened.

Without mentioning any other quality than their universal honesty, I declare this in itself enough to excite the admiration of any traveller. To be able to journey, as I did, over many leagues of country unarmed, to be able to leave one's portable property exposed wherever one stopped, without a thought of it till one's destination was reached, assured that it would arrive in safety, is enough to cause any man in his senses to hold these people in affectionate remembrance. On the eve of departure, then, I would extend to them the hand of friendship,—ay, of affection; with the assurance that one stranger, at least, will long remember their many amiable traits.

The steamer was signalled; like every one that had passed for two months, it was full of engineers for the great railroads of Mexico, all hurrying forward to the capital, that wonderful city in the mountain valley. It was not strange, then, that I should have felt impatient to join that eager throng, and to hasten

onward, where the pulse of human activity was beating more strongly.

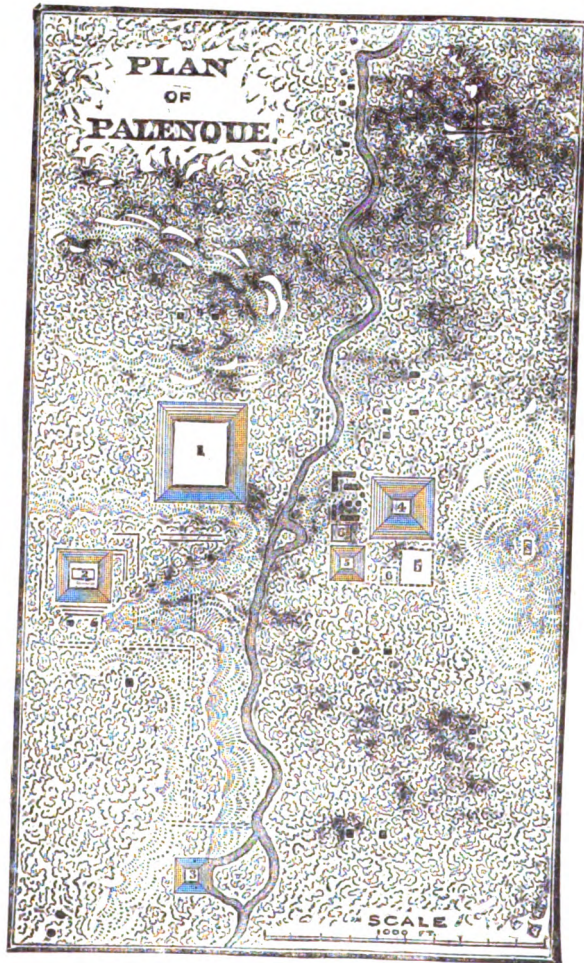
As has been observed, Yucatan possesses few natural attractions in the shape of scenery, and its coast is no better than the interior; low, flat, uninviting, save only where a clump of palms rises above the sands.

Leaving Progreso in the evening, the next morning finds us off Campeche, ten miles from shore. It is the misfortune of this rather famous port that it has no harbor,—that, in fact, no vessel of any considerable size can approach within five miles of land. It is hence difficult to say, in the morning, which of the walled towns glaring white on shore is Campeche; but as the sun gets around to the westward, in the afternoon, the veritable one stands out, like a city of marble, against hills of green. Square white buildings are then plainly visible, and cathedral towers; and other towns shine along the coast, which is high, and apparently dotted with gardens. According to the Mexican law, the steamer is obliged to remain at least twelve hours in or off a port, and this delay gives us a chance to take a peep at Campeche, though through another's spectacles. We learn that it is a finely built city, though in a hot and not over-healthy locality. The character of the surface of the province is similar to that of Yucatan, though rising higher, and everywhere may be found peculiar *subterraneos*, or caverns. The city, indeed, is built above some very extensive ones, once used as catacombs, in which have been found mummies and idols.

Below Campeche is the isolated town of Champoton, where occurred, in 1517, the bloodiest battle that preceded the advent of Cortés upon this coast, when the Indians attacked Cordova, and killed or wounded all of his party save one. Below this deserted country is the Laguna de Terminos, and the low, unhealthy coast region famous the world over as producing vast quantities of logwood. Carmen is the headquarters for the logwood-cutters, situated on an island at the mouth of the great lagoon of Terminos. The sculptured tablet, of which mention is made farther on, was shipped from Carmen, by the United States consul resident there, to the Smithsonian Institution.



Leaving Campeche, the steamer moves slowly on to Frontera, at the mouth of the river Tabasco, which once bore, and ought



- |                                |                        |             |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| 1 Palace.                      | 4 Temple of the Cross. | 7 Aqueduct. |
| 2 Temple of the Three Tablets. | 5 Temples of the Sun.  | 8 Ruins.    |
| 3 Temple of the Beau Relief.   | 6 Ruined Pyramids.     | 9 Ruins.    |

to retain, the name of Grijalva, who discovered it in 1518,—where the green and muddy waters, laden with the branches and

trunks of trees, proclaim a stream of great volume, draining an area covered with tropical vegetation. The anchorage is six miles off a low and densely-wooded coast, with two breaks in it where the river comes out to the sea. A small steamer comes out here, which takes freight and passengers to the coast town, Frontera, and also to San Juan Bautista, the capital city of Tabasco, eighteen leagues up the river, the fare to shore being five dollars, and to San Juan twelve.

Another point of historic interest now claims our attention, for here it was that Cortés encountered the first determined resistance to his arms, and in the town, which he subsequently captured, he obtained that treasure so precious to him and his army, Marina, the Tabascan princess. Cortés landed here, and, drawing his sword, took possession of the country in the name of his Majesty the King of Spain, and made three cuts in a great ceiba tree (which may yet be standing, for they live to a great age) in witness thereof, declaring himself ready to defend it, against any one who denied his Majesty's claim, with the sword and shield he then held. A terrible battle shortly after ensued, in which cavalry were first used on the soil of Mexico. The Indians fought with incredible bravery, until Cortés and his small body of horse appeared in their rear, when they were panic-stricken, thinking horse and rider one fearful being, and fled in dismay. It was on this occasion that there appeared (according to the historian Gomara) the glorious apostle St. James, riding on a dappled horse. Honest old Bernal Diaz, whose narrative I am following, says he did not see this apparition. But he adds, "Although I, unworthy sinner that I am, was unfit to behold either of those holy apostles (St. Peter and St. James), upwards of four hundred of us were present; let their testimony be taken."

After the Indians had tendered their submission, they were shown the horses, and when struck by their neighing were told that these wonderful creatures were angry because they had fought against them. The innocent natives then craved their pardon, and offered them turkey-hens and roses to eat, as did the Indians of Peten some years later.

By sailing up the river Tabasco, a point may be reached, in the season of high water, whence a journey of two days overland will bring one to those grandest of Mexican ruins, the group of Palenque; and it is but a few days' travel to Chiapas and the Pacific.

"Unlike Copan, yet buried, too, 'mid trees,  
Upspringing there for sunless centuries,  
Behold a royal city, vast and lone,  
Lost to each race, to all the world unknown,  
Like famed Pompeii, 'neath her lava bed,  
Till chance unveiled the 'City of the Dead.'  
Palenque!<sup>1</sup> seat of kings! as o'er the plain,  
Clothed with thick copse, the traveller toils with pain,  
Climbs the rude mound the shadowy scene to trace,  
He views in mute surprise thy desert grace.  
At every step some palace meets his eye,  
Some figure frowns, some temple courts the sky:  
It seems as if that hour the verdurous earth,  
By genii struck, had given these fabrics birth,  
Save that old Time hath flung his darkening pall  
On each tree-shaded tower and pictured wall."

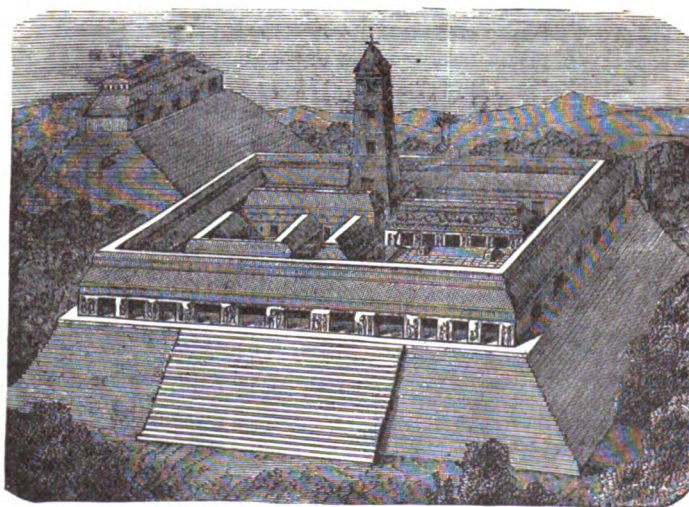
The poet has not exaggerated the beauties of Palenque, nor has pen yet adequately described them: they are indescribable. The buildings are situated eight miles from the small village of Palenque, and, though Cortés must have passed quite near them on his march to Honduras, in 1524, neither he nor his garrulous companion, Díaz, makes mention of them, and it was not till 1750 that they were discovered.

In 1787 they were explored, by order of the king of Spain, by Captain Antonio del Rio, whose report was only finally published in London in 1822. In 1807 they were investigated by Captain Dupaix, at the instance of Charles IV. of Spain; but his laborious work was not given to the light till 1834-35, in Paris. It is to the American traveller, J. L. Stephens, that we owe the best account of their present appearance, this gentleman having visited them in 1839-40, when on his way, for the first time, to Yucatan.

In Palenque we find those mounds, or terraced hillocks, upon

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced Pa-lén-kay.

which the buildings are erected, high and of vast dimensions. The "Palace" is the grandest structure, and is 238 feet in length by 180 feet deep, while its height is but 25 feet. It stands on an artificial elevation of oblong shape, 40 feet high, 310 feet front, and 260 feet at each end. It was constructed of stone, with a mortar of lime and sand, and the whole front was covered with stucco, and painted in red, blue, yellow, black, and white. Another building, the *Casa de Piedras*, is situated in a



PALENQUE RESTORED.

similar position to the *Casa del Adivino* in Uxmal, on a pyramidal structure, 110 feet high on the slope; and is "remarkably rich in stucco, bas-reliefs, and tablets of hieroglyphics."

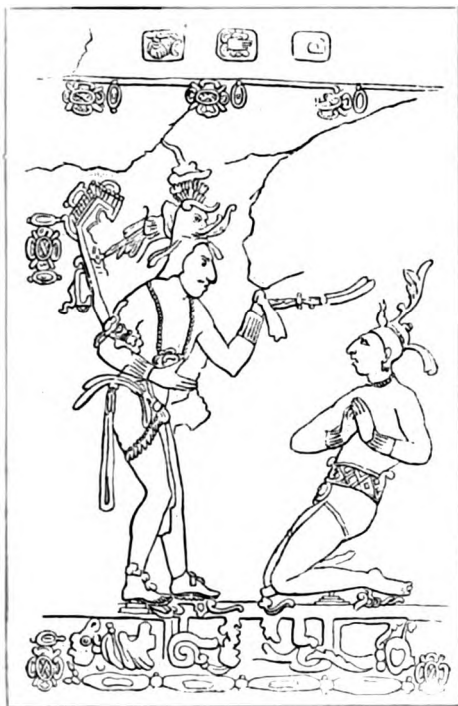
These hieroglyphics, says Stephens, "are the same (?) as were found at Copan and Quirigua. The intermediate country is now occupied by races of Indians speaking many different languages, and entirely unintelligible to each other; but there is room for the belief that the whole of this country was once occupied by the same race, speaking the same language, or at least having the same written characters."

It would not be out of place here to introduce the specula-

tions of the French naturalist, Morelet, upon the ruins and the people who once occupied them: "The analogy can no longer be denied between these ruins and the monuments of Mexico, which tradition attributes to the Toltecs. These comparisons show the action and preponderance of a common race over the whole territory lying between Cape Catoche (Yucatan) and the Mexican table-land. . . . We find that the Toltecs, in the middle of the seventh century, were in possession of Anahuac, where civilization probably developed itself. Later they abandoned this region and emigrated in a southeasterly direction, — that is to say, into the provinces of Oaxaca and Chiapas. It is easy enough, therefore, to arrive at the conclusion that Palenque was founded at this time (?), and was consequently contemporaneous with Mitla (in Oaxaca). Says Herrera: 'While the inhabitants of Mayapan (Yucatan) lived in peace and prosperity, there arrived from the south, from the heights of Lacandon, a large number of people, originally from Chiapas, who, after having wandered forty years in the wilderness, finally settled ten leagues from Mayapan, at the base of the mountains, where they built magnificent edifices and conformed to the customs of the country. . . . If the undisputed analogy be considered which exists between the ancient monuments of Mexico and the ruins of Palenque, and between the latter and those of Yucatan, and if we consider also the geographical position of these ruins, spread over the line of Toltec emigration, and bearing evidence of antiquity, the more marked because they are less distant from the point of departure, — if all these be considered, it will doubtless be granted that these different works were from the hands of the same people who successively built Tula, Mitla, Palenque, Mayapan, and all the edifices now in ruins on this peninsula."

Perhaps it will seem to later investigators more in accordance with discoveries, recent and in the past, to ascribe to Palenque the honor of being the original starting-place of the Toltecs. We should then read, as cities built in the order named, Palenque, Mayapan, Mitla, Tula, &c.; and we should also infer a greater antiquity than the above-cited writer assumes, and hold that, though the first intimation of the Toltecs is as moving from

the north southward, yet they may have primarily emigrated northward from Palenque, in ages past, now lost in obscurity, from which they only emerge in historic times as returning to their former home.



STUCCO ORNAMENT.

We are all, presumably, acquainted with the relation, by the learned Brasseur de Bourbourg, of the native tradition of Votan. This personage, accompanied by chiefs and followers, landed, many years before the opening of the Christian era, upon the shores of the Laguna de Terminos. He ascended the great Usumacinta River, a tributary of the Tabasco, and near one of its affluents laid the foundations of a large city, which became the metropolis of a mighty empire. It was called Nachan, the city of serpents, and was none other than the beautiful

Palenque, whose ruins alone we now gaze upon.

Alas for the vanity of human speculation and the insecurity of tradition! Theories, as I have previously remarked somewhere, are almost as various as the writers and investigators who have studied these ruins. There seems, however, to be a general belief that this region was the seat of a vast and influential theocratic empire. Upon the walls are sculptures which speak to us in an unknown language, hieroglyphics, and the chiselled types of a people long since departed. Regarding



these, again, a writer of the early part of this century, Galindo, says: "The physiognomies of the human figure in alto-relievo indicate that they represent a race not differing from the modern Indians; they were, perhaps, taller than the latter, who are of a middle, or rather small stature, compared with Europeans. There are also found among the ruins stones for grinding maize, shaped exactly like those employed to-day by the Central American and Mexican Indians. They consist of a stone slab (*metatl*) with three feet, all made from one piece, and a stout stone roller, with which the women crush the maize on the slab. Though the Maya language is not spoken in all its purity in this neighborhood, I am of opinion that it was derived from the ancient people that left these ruins, and that it is one of the ancient languages of America. It is still used by most of the Indians, and even by the other inhabitants of the eastern part of Tabasco, Peten, and Yucatan. Books are printed in Maya (the language of Yucatan) and the clergy preach and confess the Indians in the same language."

These observations are thrown out, not to impede the progress of the reader, but to stimulate thought upon a subject which is constantly demanding and receiving increased attention from European, as well as from American scholars. In a ruined structure known as "Casa Number Two" — it is needless to say that this is not the name bestowed by its builders — is a portion of the famous sculpture known as the "Palenque Tablet," containing the figure of the *cross*, about which archæologists have wrangled long and bitterly. A curious history pertains to this slab, which, so far as is known, is as follows. It was described and figured by Del Rio in 1787, and subsequently by all who visited the ruins, — Dupaix, Waldeck, Stephens, Charnay. In 1842, a portion of the sculptured slab was sent to the United States, where it now finds a resting-place in the National Museum at Washington. This portion is that represented in the right of the engraving, as containing the carved glyphs, and situated back of the human figure making the offering to the bird on the cross (see restored representation of the Palenque Cross, taken from the Report). To Professor Rau, of the Smithsonian Institu-

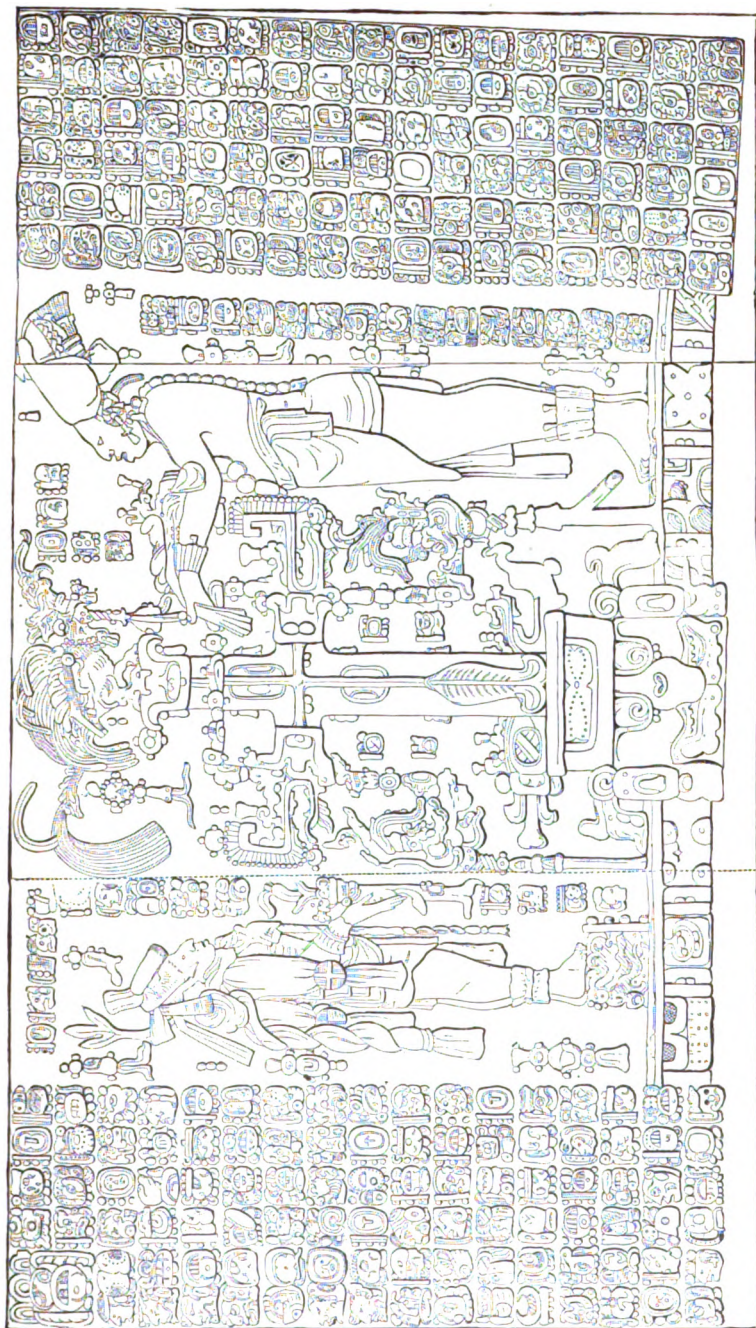
tion,<sup>1</sup> we are indebted for the restoration of the sculpture as it must have originally appeared in the "Sanctuary of the Cross," at Palenque. So that, through his diligent labors, though one portion of this valuable sculpture was torn by vandal hands from its place and sent to the United States, and another lies buried beneath the mould of the Tabascan forest, while but one third remains affixed in its original position in the wall, an exact picture of this great work as a whole is now placed before the readers of this volume. The description of it by Stephens is perhaps as good as any. "The principal subject of this tablet is the cross. It is surmounted by a strange bird, and loaded with indescribable ornaments. The two figures are evidently those of important personages. They are well drawn, and in symmetry of proportion are perhaps equal to many that are carved on the walls of the temples of Egypt. . . . Both are looking towards the cross, and one seems in the act of making an offering, perhaps of a child; all speculations on the subject are of course entitled to little regard, but perhaps it would not be wrong to ascribe to these personages a sacerdotal character. The hieroglyphics doubtless explain all. Near them are other hieroglyphics, which remind us of the Egyptian mode for recording the name, history, office, or character of the persons represented. This tablet of the cross has given rise to more learned speculation than perhaps any others found at Palenque."

We will not go into these speculations regarding the pre- or post-Columbian introduction of the cross into America, further than to mention that every evidence tends to prove the former; although we may not, perhaps, subscribe to the statement of a certain author, that it was originally brought here by St. Thomas, who is said to have preached to the Mexican heathen away back in the by-gones.

Professor Rau published an interesting comparison between the glyphs sculptured on the Tablet of the Cross and the symbols of the celebrated "Maya alphabet" of Landa, one of the first bishops of Yucatan. He found many points of contact

<sup>1</sup> "The Palenque Tablet," — Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, — by Charles Rau. Washington, 1879.

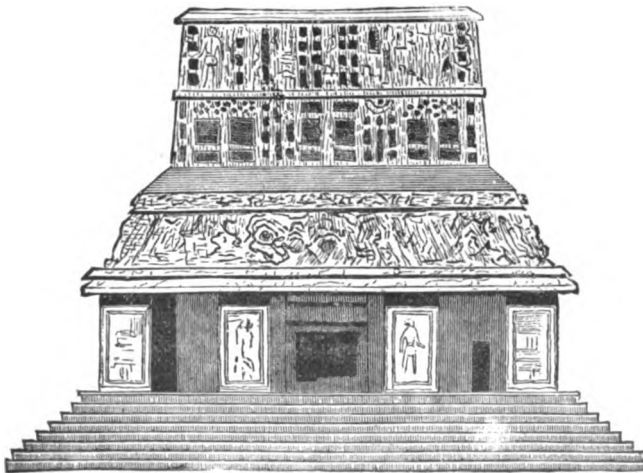




"TABLET OF THE CROSS," RESTORED.



between the two, and such differences as would naturally arise between the writing of a language at epochs perhaps thousands of years apart. Regarding the stucco ornaments, which are characteristic of Palenque, Stephens says: "The roof (of the Temple of the Cross) shows two slopes, the lower one of which was richly ornamented with stucco figures, plants, and flowers, but mostly ruined. Among them were the fragments of a beautiful head and of two bodies, in justness of proportion and symmetry approaching the Greek models." The building containing this treasure, the Tablet, is on a pyramid 134 feet high on the



TEMPLE OF THE CROSS.

slope, from the top of which a view extends, over a vast forest, to the Laguna de Terminos and the Gulf of Mexico.

The country southwest of Yucatan, that portion of Guatemala west of the British colony of Belize, south of Campeche, and east of Chiapas and Tabasco, is an almost unexplored region. Here the aboriginal Indians roam with all the freedom of their ancestors before Spanish dominion. Somewhere in this wild region is situated the "mysterious city" described by Stephens and Morelet, said to have walls of silver which glisten so that they can be seen one hundred miles away, and to be still occu-



STATUE FROM PALENQUE.

pied by the descendants of its original builders. The ruins of former races may be traced throughout all Southern Mexico, through Oaxaca, Chiapas, Tabasco, and Yucatan, until they culminate in the latter State in the wonderful structures that are the amazement of the present generation; but all are silent cities,—all their inhabitants departed, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years ago.

But here is said to be a veritable aboriginal city, not only preserving its own people, but retaining all the ancient customs and rites of their progenitors.

This is a region more worthy of investigation than the heart of Africa. To find the key to lost arts and manufactures, to find a people still preserving the rites of sacrifice,—this were enough to incite hundreds to exploration.

Unfortunately, those who go in never return! It is easy enough, apparently, to penetrate to that city, but no one who has once been there has ever been known to reach the coast again.

On the borders of that region is the wonderful Lake Peten, with its lovely town of Flores, on an island, in which the simple inhabitants set up an effigy of a horse of the Spanish con-

querors, and deified it. Now what are the facts about that city? So far as we can learn, it was first made known to people outside of Mexico through the celebrated archæologist, Stephens. The *cura* of Quiché, an Indian town in Guatemala, told him that he had seen it from the ridge of high mountains visible from that very place. The difficulties in the way appalled even an intrepid traveller like Stephens, and he shrank from undertaking its investigation. That he firmly believed this story is evident to any one reading the pages of his books. Later on, he sums up the result of his explorations, and says: "In fact, I conceive it to be not impossible that within this secluded region may exist at this day, unknown to white men, *a living, aboriginal city*, occupied by relics of the ancient race, who still worship in the temples of their fathers."



STATUE FROM COPAN.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A ruined city of Central America, on the Copan River, in Honduras. The ruins extend along the river for nearly two miles, and include a temple 624 feet long, pyramidal structures, and colossal carven idols and altar stones.



This was forty years ago. A few years later, a more adventurous traveller than Stephens, Monsieur Arthur Morelet, entered this region by the river Usumacinta, and skirted the border of that supposed centre of ancient civilization. Being alone, his adventures are of a more fascinating character than those of Stephens, who seldom departed from certain lines of travel. He plunged at once into the dense forests that surround the territory of the Lacandones, travelling from the Gulf coast at Laguna de Terminos to Lake Peten, thence to Guatemala (the capital), thence to the Gulf of Honduras, and home via Havana. He spent several years in that country, and evidently believed in the existence of the "mysterious city."

In an introduction to the English translation of the book written by the above-mentioned traveller, Mr. E. G. Squier thus speaks of this region, "lying between Chiapas, Tabasco, Yucatan, and the republic of Guatemala, and comprising a considerable portion of each of these States, which, if not entirely blank, is only conjecturally filled up with mountains, lakes, and rivers. It is almost as unknown as the interior of Africa itself. We only know that it is traversed by nameless ranges of mountains, among which the great river Usumacinta gathers its waters from a thousand tributaries, before pouring them, in a mighty flood, into the Laguna de Terminos and the Gulf of Mexico. . . . Within its depths, far off on some unknown tributary of the Usumacinta, the popular tradition of Guatemala and Chiapas places that great *aboriginal city*, with its white walls shining like silver in the sun, which the cura of Quiché affirmed he had seen with his own eyes from the tops of the mountains of Quezaltenango."

But did the endeavors to find this sacred stronghold cease with Morelet? By no means. If we are to believe a Spanish memoir, written by Don Pedro Velasquez, of Guatemala, the stories circulated by Stephens stimulated two young men of Baltimore to set out on an expedition for its discovery. Passing over the uneventful period of their voyage, we find them at last on the borders of the valley containing the object of their search. The city in all its glory of glistening walls and

magnificent statuary shone before them; they entered its precincts, after a skirmish with the Indians, and saw its mysteries. Endeavoring afterwards to escape, one of them was sacrificed upon the high altar of the sun, and the other so badly wounded that he died in the forests of Guatemala. Only Don Velasquez and a few trusty guides escaped to tell the story of their perilous adventures. This was thirty years ago, since which time, so far as we can learn, no successful attempt has been made.<sup>1</sup>

Imagine what a stimulant to an earnest explorer the possible discovery of this wonderful city offers! It would be well worth a year of one's life even to look upon its walls, and another year would be a cheap purchase of a glimpse of its interior and people! It took such a strong hold upon the writer, that he narrowly missed going on the search alone, when, in 1881, he found himself on the borders of that country, in Yucatan and in Southern Mexico. Six years ago he was in correspondence with a well-known scientist in relation to an investigation of the adjacent country, and later he made a proposition to enter that region, and to devote several years to a study of the people inhabiting it.

It is his firm conviction that in no other way can be obtained the clew to the hieroglyphs that adorn the walls of those ruins in Yucatan and Guatemala. In no other way can we hope to obtain a knowledge of that strange people, — of their language, of their ancient arts and systems of government.

Unfortunately, scientific authority did not coincide with the views expressed, or rather could not furnish the necessary funds for the purpose, and the writer went towards South America, where he remained nearly three years, engaged in ornithological labors. When he again made a proposition for an extended tropical trip, he was asked if he would accept the position

<sup>1</sup> We are not unacquainted with the recent alleged discovery, by M. Charnay, of ruins in the neighborhood of the Usumacinta, where he found an English traveller already in possession, and to which ruins he gave the name of "Lorillard City." But this, though an important discovery, was not in any sense an occupied city, nor did it add materially to our knowledge of those cities which lie buried in numbers in the immense forests of Tabasco and Guatemala.

of naturalist to an Arctic exploring expedition; this was declined, and later filled acceptably by the gallant young Newcomb, of Salem, whose adventures have been published, and are well known.

Our scientific institutions seem bent upon wasting their energies by dashing their heads against the icy barriers about the Pole. Why not turn their attention to the tropics, to that portion of our country where American civilization had its birth?



## X.

### VERA CRUZ AND JALAPA.

PERHAPS I have sufficiently indicated the position of Palenque, and the way there, my object being merely to direct attention to this region so long forgotten; for it has not been half explored. As it is far from our purpose to penetrate the wilds of Central America in search of somewhat mythical cities, but more in accordance with the times to jog along in the beaten track of travel, we will return to the coast, to Tabasco.

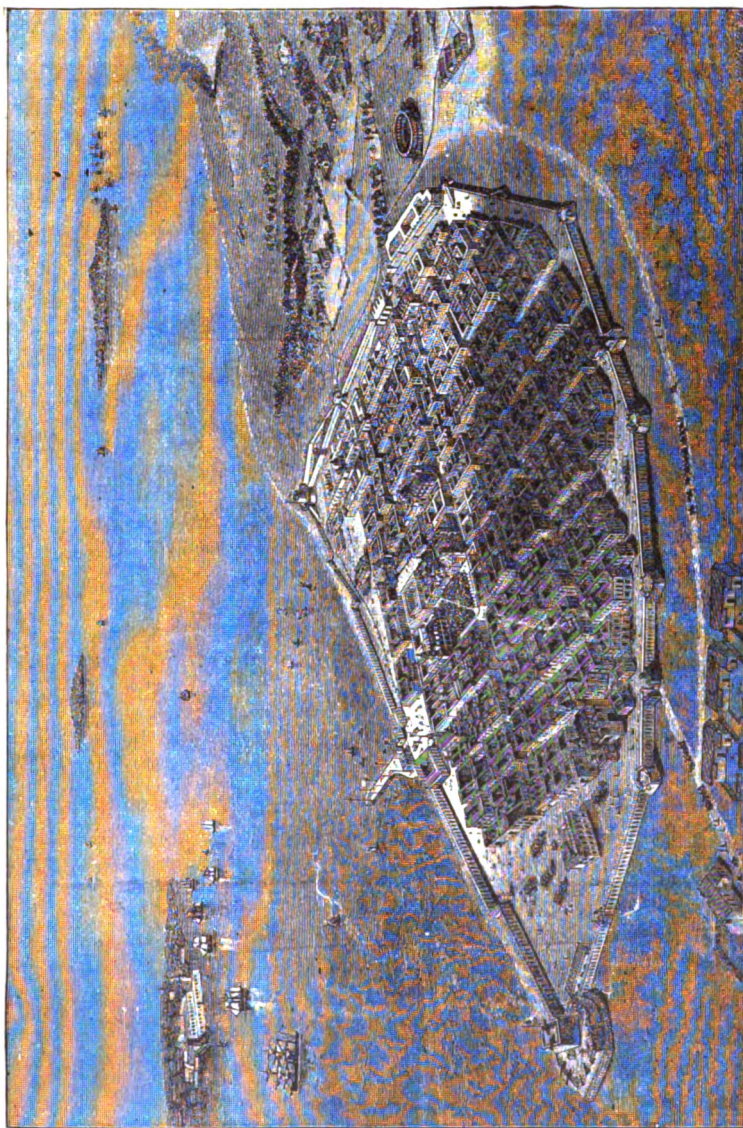
Taking with him Marina, the Tabascan princess, as his mistress, (who soon became valuable as an interpreter, and subsequently saved the Spanish army from destruction,) and a number of other captives, Cortés sailed westward and northward. Over the same route, though perhaps a little farther off shore, the steamers to-day take their course to Vera Cruz. About midway between Frontera and the port of Vera Cruz, the river Coatzacoalcos flows into the Gulf. This in itself were of no consequence, but that it indicates the narrowest portion of the continent north of Panama. Regarding this isthmus of Tehuantepec, it would be difficult to write anything new at the present day, for it has been before the public for many years as a claimant for a canal. Long before the days of Humboldt, this narrowing of the continent had drawn to it the eyes of the world. Though surveys have demonstrated the impracticability of a ship canal, they have shown the feasibility, even necessity, for a railroad. The distance across the isthmus is but little over one hundred miles, and a depression in the cordilleras renders the grades next to nothing. This road is one that assumes more than sectional importance, and rises to the dignity of an international highway. Although it is also one of

the few roads that would seem likely to benefit the builders, yet the American company engaged in the task failed, and it has reverted to the Mexican government.

It is the region above described that is passed by on the way from Progreso to Vera Cruz; a land richer in recollections of the past than possibilities for the future, but which will doubtless share in the returning tide of prosperity that is now deluging Mexico.

Another morning finds us before another port, *La Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz*, — the Rich City of the True Cross, — gateway to the Mexican capital, through which, in times past, have poured those tides of wealth that have filled the coffers of Spain. It is a lovely picture this city presents from the sea, — the line of walls lying above and in front of stretches of sand dunes, capped here and there with verdure, but mostly bare and gray. These walls are tinted, red, yellow, blue, green, but are never allowed to glare out in ghastly white. And then its domes and turrets: twenty-two can be counted from the steamer's deck, some of shining porcelain, that glisten like polished marble in the sunshine. The suburbs to the south seem even more attractive than the city, with low, red-roofed houses, groups of palms, and ruined forts. Down the coast stretch the wind-blown sandhills, — the *medanos*, — yellow, flecked with green, with coral reefs tossing the foam above the blue water, and the Island of Sacrifices — *Isla de los Sacrificios* — lying low to the eastward.

Under the walls of the castle fortress, *San Juan de Ulua*, the steamer drops anchor, half a mile from the mole, where seems concentrated the life of the city. This castle is built upon a small barren island, upon which Juan de Grijalva landed, in June, 1518. It being the day of the feast of St. John, the island was called San Juan de Ulua. The Spaniards found idols here, and vestiges of human sacrifices, offered, the Indians told them, by the natives of Culchua, or Ulua (Mexico). The construction of the fortress is believed to have been begun in 1662, though spoken of in 1625, but not finished till 1796, when a light-tower (still standing) was added. Several inscriptions,



ISLA DE LOS SACRIFICIOS.

VERA CRUZ.

(Before its fortifications were levelled.)

SAN JUAN DE ULUA.



bearing date respectively 1633, 1700, 1707, and 1778, attest the progress of various portions of the work. It is in shape a rather irregular parallelogram, with a small watch-tower, or rampart, on each one of its angles. Besides the guns of the structure proper, it has water batteries, and was considered at one time impregnable. It is half a mile from shore, and commands the city, which it has several times nearly reduced to ruins. It was held by the Spaniards until 1825, and remained loyal to the king of Spain for nearly four years after their expulsion from the mainland. At present used as a prison for political offenders, it is especially dreaded by prisoners from the interior of the country, as incarceration there is almost sure to end in death, from disease engendered in its damp dungeons.

If the coast is approached in clear weather, there may be seen that glorious apparition, the volcano of Orizaba, its profile sharply cut against the blue sky full sixty miles inland. Known to the ancient Aztecs as *Cittlaltépetl*, or the Mountain of the Star, it was called by the Spanish sailors *La Estrella de la Mar*, — the Star of the Sea. And well it merits this latter title, since its crystal peak, borne on high 17,500 feet, is visible more than one hundred miles away.

The half-mile or so between steamer and quay is soon gone over, in boats shaded by awnings and propelled by boatmen clad in immaculate garments of white, and you are soon ashore and inspecting the city.

One of the hottest cities of the republic, Vera Cruz is also the unhealthiest, and by some strange anomaly it is likewise one of the cleanest. Streets white and clean are drained by gutters equally free from filth; and if any refuse escapes the eye of the sanitary authorities, those other members of the board of health, the *vultures*, are sure to snatch it up and bear it away, or devour it on the spot.

These valued birds are seen by hundreds, perched on every roof-top, and waddling through all the streets. They are called



A ZOPILOTE.

*zopilotes*, from the Aztec word *zopilotl*, and belong to the genus *Cathartes*, — two species, *aura*, or the turkey buzzard, and *atratus*, the black vulture.

The Plaza is the only attractive point in the city; and though it is small, it has marble walks and some wind-blown trees. The architecture is the same as that of all these cities of New Spain transplanted from the mother country, — a combination of Spanish and Moorish that redeems the city from sameness and makes it interesting to a stranger. That the hotels are clean and fairly served, that there is a tramway with a single track traversing the city, that you run the risk of catching the *vomito*, or yellow fever, if you pass a night on shore, — all these items of information are given in the guide-books, and have become familiar to every traveller.

There need be no exaggeration regarding the vomito, for there is scarcely room for any, in a city which has for many years been known as *la ciudad de los muertos*, — the city of the dead. The Vera-Cruzians claim that the death-rates are over-estimated, yet people enough succumb to “Yellow Jack,” for all that, to make a stranger cautious how he exposes himself. Periodical visits from this dread visitor are as sure as taxes and death in its ordinary shape. In June, 1881, for instance, people were dying at the rate of one hundred a week.

A clipping from a Mexican newspaper, of the date of my residence in the city of Mexico, will illustrate the extent to which this evil had spread, and was raging at that time: —

“Pandora’s box was not a circumstance to the evils which Vera Cruz contains. Advices from there state that the yellow fever prevails to an extent unknown in other years.

“Old residents are dead and dying, and medical aid is pronounced of no avail. Whole families are leaving for Jalapa and Orizaba. In addition, the city has the typhoid and bilious fevers, small-pox, and several other pleasant adjuncts to agreeable living. The panic is very great.”

From my note-book of that date I extract the following: —

“Forty deaths a day are reported from yellow fever and small-pox in Vera Cruz. It would seem as though no one would be left to carry on

business in that ancient city ; yet it goes on the same, in spite of the dead and dying. A friend just up from the coast tells me that he saw eight bodies carried out the morning he arrived. Yet the residents there treat the matter lightly. The late American Consul, Dr. Trowbridge, who has had a successor appointed, after twelve years of service, retires in health, and laughing at the reports of fever. He is waiting for his successor. If I were that man I should let him wait, — at least till cooler weather came. Dr. Trowbridge and his family had yellow fever the first week they came to Vera Cruz, while his predecessor, who had held the office many years, and had resigned, died before he could leave the city. It is strange, yet I hear there were hundreds of applicants for that precarious consulship at Vera Cruz, where an escape from the clutches of 'Yellow Jack' is an exception. Are offices, then, so scarce up North?"

A week later the paper quoted from above contained this item: —

"Hon. E. H. Rogers, of Nebraska, who was recently appointed Consul at Vera Cruz, died last Monday from the fatal effects of the climate.

"Mr. Rogers had but just arrived, and had not entered upon the discharge of his duties when his death occurred. Much sorrow is felt in this city over the sad news. The funeral rites of the deceased were observed at the Evangelical Church of Vera Cruz."

I was in the city of Mexico when the news of the appointment of the new Consul reached us there, and remember that we all speculated as to the probable length of his stay, expecting he would soon be taken with the vomito, but little dreaming of such a fatal termination. Again, in returning through Vera Cruz in September, on my way back to the United States, I experienced the welcome hospitality of the Trowbridges, and under date of that visit find the following entry in my notebook: —

"At the United States consulate, all the old family who have been there so long, and have made Americans so welcome, were residing, except Dr. Trowbridge, the head of it, who was absent in the United States. The sad ending of the recent attempt to replace him, by the death of his successor after but thirteen days' residence, should read a lesson to those in office in Washington, who appoint men to foreign stations for which they are not qualified nor acclimated. The twelve years'

residence of Dr. Trowbridge here as our Consul, during which he has discharged the duties of the office faithfully, and won respect from every body, should entitle him to a reappointment. It is impossible for one not acclimated to reside in this city long without receiving a visit from the vomito, which may prove fatal. The Doctor and his family have passed through many bad seasons, they have all had the fever, and it is to be hoped they may be spared yet many years to live in a place they seem to like."

Though Vera-Cruzians deny that the vomito is endemic here, it has existed too long in this place to have their assertion believed. The oldest description of yellow fever is that of a Portuguese physician, who observed it in Brazil, between 1687 and 1694; and its first appearance in Mexico is said by the historian Clavigero to have been in 1725. Even the best of our physicians disagree as to the origin, and even the contagious character, of the vomito; hence, we will not discuss this vexed question. But it would seem that the latest theory, that of a South American physician, that it is propagated by germs from the soil in which fever victims have been buried, and thus rendered endemic, was more nearly correct than any other yet advanced. It has been noted that it rages more violently in some seasons than in others; and Humboldt stated that an intimate connection was always observed between the march of diseases and the variations of atmospheric temperature. "Two seasons only are known at Vera Cruz,—that of the north winds (*los nortes*), from the autumnal to the vernal equinox, and that of the south winds, or breezes (*brisas*), between March and September. The month of January is the coldest in the year, because it is farthest from the two periods in which the sun passes through the zenith of Vera Cruz (the 16th of May and the 27th of July). The vomito generally begins to rage in that term when the mean temperature of the month reaches 75° Fahrenheit. In December, January, and February, the heat remains below this limit; and, accordingly, it seldom happens that the yellow fever does not entirely disappear in that season, when a very sensible cold is frequently felt."

The last and the first months of the year, then, are the safest



in which to pass through Vera Cruz, and the midsummer months the most dangerous. Although the fever commences in May, it is generally at its worst in August and September, as it requires a certain time for the germs of the disease to develop. The disease first attacks strangers in the country, especially those from a colder climate, where frost occurs; and it has been observed by Humboldt that among people from the table-lands of Mexico the mortality is relatively greater than among visitors coming from over the sea.

A stay in Vera Cruz even of a few hours is sufficient for one to contract the contagion, during the season of fever, and the greatest precautions must be taken by those who are compelled to run the gantlet in the summer months. We have had many lamentable examples of late years, one of the most to be deplored being that of General Ord, our brave army officer, whose business and family interests took him to Mexico, and who died in Havana, of fever contracted at Vera Cruz. I have purposely digressed from our line of march to repeat the warning to would-be visitors to Mexico, not to pass through Vera Cruz in the summer season.

Once a person has had the fever, he generally has immunity from further attack, and the old residents of Vera Cruz laugh at its approach, and pursue their avocations without seriously regarding it. This is why they cling so strongly to this pestilential seaport, since the transfer of its business to a new and more healthy locality has often been urged, and always by them strenuously resisted.

General Grant, when President of the Mexican Southern Railroad, encountered great opposition from them because he proposed having the Gulf terminus of his line at Anton Lizardo, a healthy locality, with a comparatively good harbor, some distance down the coast. His improvements were even begun at that place, and had they been finished, and railway connection made with the table-land, Vera Cruz would have been left to the position it richly deserves, as a forsaken charnel-house of mouldering bones. Its roadstead is notoriously poor, affording no protection to the vessels coming there, although the famous

island of Ulua, containing a fortress costing \$16,000,000, lies to windward. Nearly all the business is conducted by French and German merchants, who have risked their lives in their attempts at acclimatization, and are now richly rewarded by large and increasing fortunes.

Another thing to encounter, equally dreadful in its way with the fever, is the customs duty. Though it is an undeniable fact that the merchants of the country are robbed by wholesale, sometimes paying duties on goods to the amount of twice their original cost, yet the traveller is rarely molested. One should not fail to pay a deserved tribute to the Mexican customs official, who is ever courteous and attentive. He does not seem to bear that surly antipathy towards travellers which his brother official of the United States almost invariably displays. At the very ports of this country, before you have fairly made the acquaintance of the people, you will perceive in them a demeanor in most refreshing contrast to that of the *habitués* of the docks of New York. The traveller is permitted to enter all his personal apparel free of duty, as well as two watches, two revolvers, — in fact, everything that he really needs. A great many things he does not need may be taken in also, for the official's pay is meagre, and he loves to gaze upon the portraits of American worthies as depicted on the faces of our national currency. Remember, however, that *cinco pesos* (five dollars) is sufficient to provide said official with many luxuries, as the rate of exchange is sometimes as high as twenty per cent in our favor. At the verge of the voyage, also, it would be well to caution the traveller that he must, if requested, state to the proper authorities his name and profession. This done, he may be at liberty to wander at his own sweet will. *Vaya con Dios!* — Go, and the Lord be with you!

The reader hardly needs to be reminded that Vera Cruz was virtually founded by Cortés; that his landing-place was on the city's site; that he here disembarked his troops, destroyed his ships, and entered upon the march inland that has made his name as famous as that of Alexander and from which he returned only when he had conquered the country.



VERA CRUZ.



"It was on Holy Thursday, of the year 1519," says the stout old chronicler, Bernal Diaz, whom we shall encounter at intervals throughout our journey, "that we arrived at the port of San Juan de Ulua, and Cortés hoisted the royal standard." He first landed on the island now crowned by the castle, where Grijalva had preceded him by a year. Though the first buildings erected by the Spaniards were upon this spot, yet the site was changed several times, before it was finally fixed at the present location in the year 1600.

Though Vera Cruz has suffered probably above every other city in Mexico, from the combined influences of plagues, pirates, and hurricanes, yet to-day it exists as a prosperous and well-conditioned city. As the only port on the eastern coast with any semblance of a harbor, it has monopolized Mexican commerce with foreign nations, and has always been opulent and animated. In olden times, like Havana and Cartagena, it was exposed to the assaults of pirates and buccaneers, into whose hands it fell in 1568, and again in 1683, when the pirates Agramont and Lorencillo sacked the city, and destroyed more than three hundred of the inhabitants. In 1618 a terrible fire swept over it.

In 1803 the first great road was commenced to the city of Mexico, there having been till that time little more than the foot-paths worn by mules and asses coming down from the mountains. In the war for independence Vera Cruz was the theatre of strife between the opposing factions on many occasions, and in 1822 and 1823 was terribly bombarded by the Spaniards in the fortress of San Juan. The city bears the distinguishing title of "heroic," especially granted it by Congress, in honor of the many sieges it has gallantly sustained. In 1838 city and castle were attacked by the French without any provocation; and in March, 1847, suffered from a cannonade by the American fleet, the effects of which may be seen to-day. In 1856 a hurricane destroyed nearly all the shipping in the harbor; in 1859 Juarez, the republican President, landed here after his circular voyage around Mexico, and here he was besieged by General Miramon. In 1861 the "intervention" fleet made its appear-

ance, and the city was in possession of the French and Imperialists until 1867, when the cause of freedom triumphed, and nothing has since occurred to interrupt its career of commercial prosperity.

The great State of Vera Cruz, of which this city is the commercial emporium, comprises the central portion of the Gulf coast of Mexico, and lies mainly in the hot country producing the fruits and vines of the tropics. Throughout its whole extent bordering the coast, it maintains a reputation for insalubrity, and is undesirable to live in. As a place of refuge from the heat and vomito, and the insect plagues that sometimes annoy the inhabitants of the coast, the town of Jalapa — pronounced Halápa — has an extensive reputation. Situated at a height above the sea of over four thousand feet, it is yet only seventy miles from Vera Cruz, and is reached in one day.

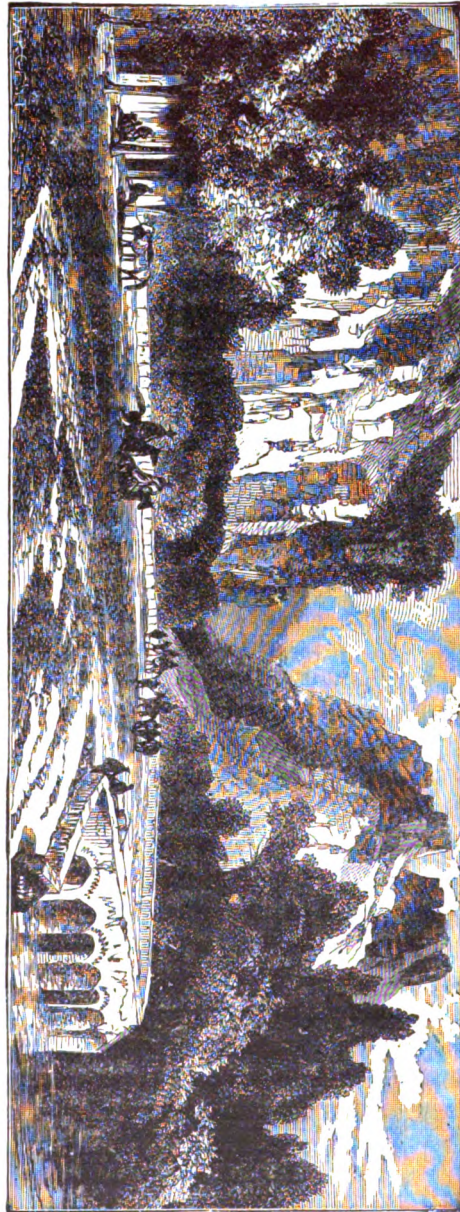
Having a few days to spare before leaving for the capital, I resolved to look upon this town in the mountains, celebrated for the beauty of its scenery, its women, and its flowers. At three in the morning the porter of the hotel drew me forth from the cell which the proprietor had assigned me as a bedroom, the night before, and led the way to the station, through streets that were dark and cool, but heavy with vile odors. We went by steam to San Juan, sixteen miles, over flat plains, and then changed for a tramway, which does the remaining sixty miles or so to Jalapa. At first we passed through a section of rich land; but as the ascent commenced, vegetation was parched and dry; yet there was everywhere a blossom, though few birds, and no butterflies. Three cars composed our train, divided respectively into first, second, and third class, and each one drawn by four mules. We made but one stop before reaching the Puente Nacional, — the National Bridge, — a magnificent viaduct, under which flowed a large river, where a stone fort commanded the approach for half a mile or so on either side. The old Spanish road, paved and curbed, over which General Scott marched from Vera Cruz to Jalapa, on his way to Mexico, is the same one we now take; but it is wellnigh abandoned by teams, nearly all freight passing over the tramway. Near this



bridge are the ruins of Santa Anna's hacienda, and along the road beyond on both sides of it, we passed numerous black crosses, erected over the graves of murdered men, buried where they fell. Forty miles on our journey brought us to Rinconada, where the mules were changed for the second time, and where a good breakfast was served.

In this small, out-of-the-way place, a sight greeted my eyes that rendered me for the moment speechless. I have already spoken of the great influx of engineers into this country; they crowded every steamer, and worried the lives out of every officer on board by criticisms of the management of the machinery. Having seen these knights of the theodolite on board ship,

EL PUENTE NACIONAL.



dressed in fine clothes, groaning under the weight of massive gold chains and chronometers, — men who shaved once every other day, got their boots blacked by the porter, and constantly threw out such like evidences of familiarity with a bank account, — having witnessed all this, I was not prepared for what I saw at that small station, where the mules kindly halted to allow us dusty travellers a chance to wash the dust out of our throats. It was this: a young man leaning against the doorpost.

Stalwart young men and doorposts are not uncommonly met with together, as many a young woman can testify; but it was not the young man especially, nor the doorpost, that riveted my gaze, but his costume. Beneath a great sombrero, with a brim little less than a yard wide, stood a woollen shirt and leather breeches, girt about with a pistol-belt full of cartridges, and stuck around with revolvers; a rifle leaned against the left arm, while the right hand of the owner of all this furniture was stroking a beard belonging to a countenance not at all unfamiliar. While I was beating my brains to recall where I had met this handsome ruffian before, summoning up Buffalo Bill, Davy Crockett, the ghost of Texas Jack, and all the rangers of the prairie that had crossed my track, this formidable being hailed me. He called me by name, and extended a palm horny with the blisters of two weeks in the field with compass and line. It was Smith, fellow-passenger on a previous steamer, who had exchanged a spick-and-span New York suit for the garb of the Mexican, and who wore girt about his loins the implements of warfare peculiar to the land of the Mexican; his countenance, which he was so careful to keep from being sun-burnt when on board steamer, was now a flaring red, and his hair, which he was wont to anoint with oil and part in the middle, was frowzy, and proclaimed by stray hairs from another species of animal, here and there, the color of the blanket he last slept in. As soon as I had discovered my friend in this disguise, and became convinced that it was not a highwayman lying in wait for my gold, we went in and cemented our friendship in the usual manner.



Fifty-five miles from the coast is Cerro Gordo, famous in the annals of the Mexican war, — a narrow pass between very high hills. Regarding the passage of Cerro Gordo, an English traveller reluctantly yields to our troops the following praise: "That ten thousand Americans should have been able to get through the mountain passes, and to reach the capital at all, is an astonishing thing; and after that, their successes in the valley of Mexico follow as a matter of course. They could never have crossed the mountains but for a combination of circumstances."

The road is everywhere commanded; there was no other trail, — hills and mountains on every side; so General Scott had to throw skirmishers along all these ridges before his army could pass. It is a long distance through, and must have been a perilous pass, with just width enough between high cliffs for the road to run. Not far from the narrowest portion, a trail leads off to the left, up to a ridge where cannon are yet found, and behind which Santa Anna lost his leg, — his wooden one. A few tile-covered, tumble-down shanties constitute the hamlet of Cerro Gordo, half a mile farther on.

The land is now of the uplands. Cerro Gordo guards the passage from the hot lowlands to the salubrious temperate region; streams now run by the track, good pasturage commences, and the way is all up hill. Some four miles farther we entered rolling upland pastures, where corn was growing, and a straggling hacienda was visible now and again. Beyond this the ridges are covered with hard woods, corn and sugar-cane grow side by side in the vales, fields of barley are spread invitingly about, and, as we gallop into Jalapa, we cannot but notice the groves of coffee trees by which the houses are surrounded.

At the Hotel Vera-Cruzana, a low building about an open court with fountains and flowers, we obtained good accommodation, at the termination of our ride of nearly twelve hours. Though generally surrounded by clouds of mist, Jalapa possesses a superior situation, with grand mountain views, and the combined vegetation of the high and the low country. Possessing also a temperate climate, it produces, it is said, the prettiest

women and loveliest flowers in Mexico proper. Its architecture is not remarkable, if we except the old convent, said to have been built in the time of Cortés, and unless we consider the manner in which the houses — all of stone — are perched on the hillsides. The gardens of Jalapa are noted all over Mexico, because in them are gathered fruits and flowers of every zone. Coffee is the staple product, but bananas and plantains, as well as corn, fraternize with it, and serve to give a character to these gardens that impresses one strongly with the possibilities of this climate.

In the forests, out of sight, on the eastern declivity of the cordilleras of Vera Cruz, flourishes that aromatic-fruited plant,



VANILLA.

the vanilla, — *Vanilla planifolia*. It is indigenous to the humid forests, and is carefully sought out and gathered by the Indians of the *tierra caliente*. The plant requires little care, but shade and moisture are necessary to its existence. The Indians, who yet reside in their primitive villages, are restricted in the harvest season by the *alcalde*, who apporions to each his share of the labor. The harvest begins in March and April, and continues two or three

months. The pods are carefully dried in the sun, and packed for shipment with equal solicitude.

Vanilla was assiduously cultivated by the Totonacs, who anciently dwelt in the coast region of Vera Cruz, and who

supplied the article to Montezuma and the Aztec nobles. Ruins of the structures erected by these Totonacs lie thick throughout the vast forests, in a line between Jalapa and the coast, going northward. Some of them have names, such as Misantla, Mapilca, and Papantla. The first named lies within thirty miles of Jalapa; but little is known of any of these groups, though the pyramid of Papantla was described eighty years ago. The base of this pyramid is an exact square, each side twenty-five metres in length, and its perpendicular height about twenty metres. It is composed of six successive stages, like the true *teocallis* of Mexico, and a great staircase of fifty-seven steps leads to the truncated summit. Hieroglyphics and strange figures, such as serpents and alligators, are carved in relief on the faced stones of each story, while a multitude of square niches, 366 in number, have given rise to the conjecture that they, in some occult sense, had connection with the ancient Toltec calendar; twelve additional niches in the stair toward the east may have stood for the "useless" or intercalated days at the end of their cycle.

To revert again to the charms of Jalapa; it is not my own unsupported testimony that I would offer. All travellers who have recorded their impressions of this city concur in praising its scenery and its *doncellas*. Says the Mexican adage, "*Las Jalapeñas son muy halagüeñas*," — "The women of Jalapa are very bewitching." And Mr. Ward (1827): "It is impossible that any words should convey an adequate idea of the country about Jalapa. It stands in the centre of some of the finest mountain scenery which any country can boast of." Humboldt was in love with it, and perhaps with the *doncellas* as well, for he had a very susceptible nature, this grand old man, — not old when he visited Mexico, but young and handsome.

The only drawback to perpetual enjoyment here is the drizzling rain, which the clouds from the Gulf, their burdens of moisture condensed by the cool mountain-tops, precipitate upon Jalapa. This drizzle is called the *chipi-chipi*. "Then," says the traveller Ruxton, "the sun is for days obscured, and the Jalapeño, muffled in his *sarape*, smokes his *cigarro*, and mutters,

'*Ave Maria purissima, que salga el sol.*' Liberally, 'Holy Mary, let the sun come out!'" Jalapa was formerly on the great highway between Vera Cruz and Mexico (the city), which, both below and beyond, was infested by the *salteadores*, or



RUINS OF PAPANTLA.

"gentlemen of the road." Of the past, however, are these tales, for the railway has superseded the diligence, and the poor highwayman must now labor with his hands.

Xalapa was a town existing when the first Spaniards marched up these mountains, as is stated in their reports. Beyond it is

the famous mountain of Perote, called by an Aztec name signifying casket, in Spanish *cofre*, from its rectangular shape, and near its base the town of Perote, where American prisoners were confined in 1847. Though we had looked anxiously for that plant from which the town derived its name, that tried friend of old-school physicians, jalap, — *Ipomœa Jalapa*, — we had not been successful. Only the name remains, though the plant may still be hidden in some dark ravine, or in the deep forest, like the vanilla, for which the coast country below was formerly celebrated.

My companions on the way up were the celebrated artist, Church, painter of "The Heart of the Andes," and his lovely wife, who were then on their return trip towards the United States, and who expressed themselves as delighted with the mountain scenery of the plateau. It was early morning as we left Jalapa on the downward trip, left it still crouching beneath the clouds that hovered over it, and scampered — or our mules did — down the hills. The mules were whipped into a gallop, and changed every three leagues, so that the journey to the coast was half accomplished ere the sun made it very hot.

"The worse the road, the harder ply the whip," is the motto of all Mexican drivers; so we sped through the pass of Cerro Gordo at an awful rate, taking sharp curves and spinning over its tortuous road at top speed. Beyond Rinconada, we descended the steep grades in a cloud of dust, racing with the second and third class cars, the heat growing more and more oppressive every mile; and in this manner we ran into the hot country again, and on the morrow took the train for the capital.

## XI.

### FROM COAST TO CAPITAL.

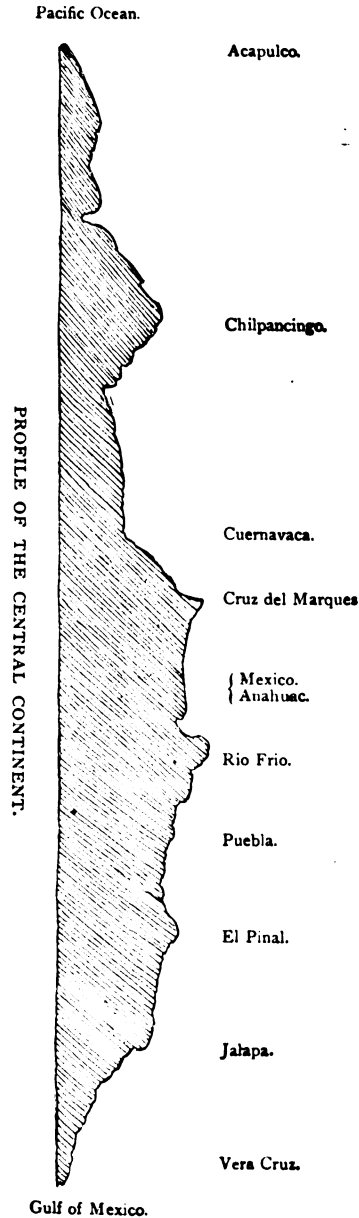
MEXICO lies at the meeting-place of two zones, — the temperate and the torrid; and from its geographical position, combined with its varying altitudes, possesses a greater variety of soil, surface, and vegetation than any equal extent of contiguous territory in the world. Basking in the sunshine of the tropics, her head pillowed in the lap of the North, her feet resting at the gateway of the continents, her snowy bosom rising to the clouds, she rests serene in the majesty of her might. She guards vast treasures of gold and silver, emeralds and opals adorn her brow, while the hem of her royal robe, dipped in the seas of two hemispheres, is embroidered with pearls and the riches of ocean.

Mother of Western civilization! cradle of the American race! a thousand years have been gathered into the sheaf of time since her first cities were built. When the Norsemen coasted our Northern shores, she had towns and villages, and white-walled temples and palaces. When the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, a hundred years had already passed since the soldiers of Cortés had battled with the hosts of Montezuma. Three centuries, and more, have rolled by since her conquest, and into the treasury of Spain, through this same city of the True Cross, she has poured golden streams and silver floods of royal revenue. Her ten millions of people occupy one million square miles of territory, having a length of 1,800, a breadth of 800, and a coast line of 5,500 miles.

While yet upon her coast, let us glance at the country we have come to visit. Rising above the limit of her mountains clothed in snow, let us take a bird's-eye view of this great "central continent."

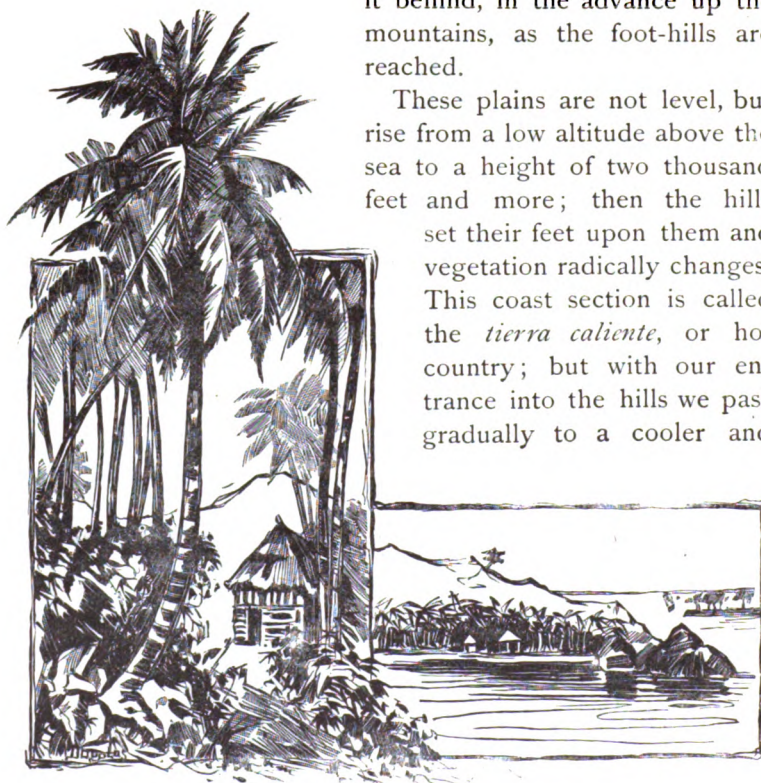
The mountain chain that is so depressed at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec divides into two as it reaches Mexican territory, forming the eastern and western cordilleras that run along either coast. These great mountain ranges, then, guard an immense central plateau, supporting some of the highest pinnacles on this continent.

Between the bases of these ranges and the coasts there is a broad expanse of comparatively level land, known as the *savanas*, or *llanos*. This portion of the country is hot, and in the main unhealthy. The great plains are characterized by general aridity in the dry season, and are partially submerged in the season of rains. Covered with coarse grass, they are the resort of great herds of cattle, but their vegetation consists principally of stunted, prickly, and thorny trees. Like oases in this grassy desert are the spots fertilized by some stream or lake, where the trees and plants are of the tropics, and all the fruits of the hot zone are produced in abundance: such as cacao and coco, vanilla and spices, sugar-cane, bananas,



oranges, and mangos. To impress upon one the character of the vegetation of the coast, a group of coco palms must be imagined, waving their long leaves wildly in the wind or shining like gold in the sun. Essentially a littoral product, the coco-palm is rarely found far inland, and the equally beautiful and tropical plant, the banana, leaves it behind, in the advance up the mountains, as the foot-hills are reached.

These plains are not level, but rise from a low altitude above the sea to a height of two thousand feet and more; then the hills set their feet upon them and vegetation radically changes. This coast section is called the *tierra caliente*, or hot country; but with our entrance into the hills we pass gradually to a cooler and



PALMS OF THE COAST.

more salubrious climate, called by the natives *tierra templada*, the temperate region. Here, indeed, Nature manifests herself in her grandest productions; vegetation begins to be profuse; the huts of the natives, the great and towering trees, the rocks, the entire surface of the soil, are covered with gay flowers and



luxuriant vines: orchids, oleanders, roses, honeysuckles, and convolvuli "make glad these solitary places," and tall yuccas, palms, and tree-ferns make them picturesque.

Rising higher and higher, the eye is bewildered by the vast number of vegetable forms that are massed upon the trees, the wild pines, air-plants, and hosts of ferns, bignonias with tints of sea-shells, orchids with spikes of blossoms, dragon plants, and an entire world of creepers and parasitic vines, unknown to any but the skilled botanist. Thus we pass through a zone unknown to us of the North, that has also forms not found in the low tropics. It is called the "temperate region" because of its delightful climate and equable temperature; but it not only combines the vegetation of two zones, but also the heat and moisture of the lowlands with the cool breezes and salubrious atmosphere of the temperate country.

Having traced the lapping of the two girdles in other places, in the lesser islands of the West Indies, and having noted and admired the blending of the two zones in this middle ground, I had long ago given this region (in imagination, before it passed under my eyes) the name of *Tropic Border-land*. The flowers here do not lose their scent, as some imagine; the birds are tuneful, — though some would have us believe to the contrary, — and the annoying insects less abundant than below. Paradise, if it can be located on this earth, will occupy a position in the *tierra templada*, in some belt half-way up a tropic mountain, whether in Mexico or in South America, in the West Indies or in the Himalayas, where altitude confers all the favors resulting from a change of country in other lands. There is no deadly disease here, as in the coast country; at an elevation of three thousand feet above the sea there is little danger from the *vomito*, and, except for local causes, other fevers seldom molest the inhabitants.

As far up as four thousand feet the sugar-cane, coffee, rice, tobacco, and banana may be raised; and all the fruits of the world, both the new and the old, may be produced here in greater or less perfection. Beyond this, vegetation is less luxuriant; the grains of the Old World, as wheat and barley, flourish best

at an altitude of six thousand feet; here the pines commence, though oaks were met with two thousand feet below, while corn, the great tasselled chieftain of the West, being on indigenous soil, has marched with us all the way from the coast, and climbed with us up the sides of the mountains. At about seven thousand feet, the great plains are reached that lie between the eastern and western cordilleras, and cover an area of some fifteen hundred miles in length by five hundred in breadth. Here cactus and aloe, cypress and cedar, proclaim another zone, the *tierra fria*, or "cold country," where not a trace of tropical vegetation exists except in the equivocal cacti and maguey. Shooting above the plateau, the great volcanoes Orizaba, Ixtaccihuatl, and Popocatepetl, lift their hoary heads high into the clouds, and if we ascend their sides to their summits, we shall have traced vegetation to its last limit, — from the palms, bananas, and sugar-cane of the heated coast, through the oranges, apples, peaches of the temperate belt, the wheat, barley, aloes, the oaks, pines, and hemlocks of the *tierra fria*, to the last starry cryptogam that flecks the borders of the eternal snows!

In no country in the world can you pass so rapidly from zone to zone, — from the blazing shores of the heated tropics to the region of perpetual winter, from the land of the palm and vine to that of the pine and lichen, — for in twenty hours this can be accomplished, and the traveller may ascend a snow peak with the sands of the shore still upon his shoes.

In going over the Mexican railroad, one witnesses a perfect exposition of the products of the entire country, for it cuts the backbone of the continent, and climbs from hot, unhealthy coast to frigid mountain-top. Fancying yourself again in Vera Cruz, and that you have seen the few objects of interest, — the plaza, the municipal palace, custom-house, convent, and library, — you are awaiting anxiously the train that leaves for the capital. The heavy cars roll finally out of the station, across the line of ancient fortifications (now levelled), and over the broad *llanos* that border the coast. As we speed over these plains, we may, if the moon be shining, obtain a parting glimpse of the domed and turreted town, set in a framework of tropical



IN TIERRA CALIENTE.



vegetation, and the tropic night manifests itself, not only in the brilliancy of its stars, but in the myriads of its fire-flies. These insects of the night may remind us of the story related by the Spanish chroniclers, of the army of Narvaez, which was put to flight by an apparition of these fire-flies, they mistaking them for the lights of an approaching enemy.

The ascent commences almost at the very gates of Vera Cruz, and at the station of Tejeria, a place noted in the history of Mexico, nine and one half miles distant, we are one hundred feet above the sea. There are no villages on the plains, and few houses except the ranchos of the cattle-owners, and the hamlet of Purga, which reminds us emphatically of the drastic cathartic properties of the indigenous jalap. Passing through Soledad, a hamlet of a few hundred people, the first station of any importance is Paso del Macho, containing fifteen hundred inhabitants, and situated 1,560 feet above Vera Cruz. Three miles beyond this station we cross the bridge of San Alejo, 318 feet in length; at Chiquihuite, another, 220 feet long; and at Atoyac roll over the famous bridge of that name, having a length of 330 feet, spanning the Atoyac River, which empties at the port of Vera Cruz, fifty-three miles distant. Like the plains, which are intersected by deep *barrancas*, at the bottom of which, in the rainy season, flow turbid rivers, these lower hills are cut up by numerous ravines, rich in all the charming vegetation of the tropics, but offering almost insuperable obstacles to railway construction. Beyond Atoyac the ascent grows steeper, the grades continually increasing, and the course of the railway necessarily becoming circuitous, in order to overcome it. Rank grow the wonderful plants on either side, tumultuous rush the rivers from mountains clothed in verdure, each mile adding, if possible, to the wealth of the vegetable kingdom concentrated here, until it reaches perfection in the valleys lying about Cordova, twenty-seven hundred feet above the sea and sixty-five miles from the Gulf. It is here that the traveller first allows himself to take a long, free breath, without fear of drawing in the germs of yellow fever or malarial disease. The scenery delights him, and he would gladly stop awhile in this region,

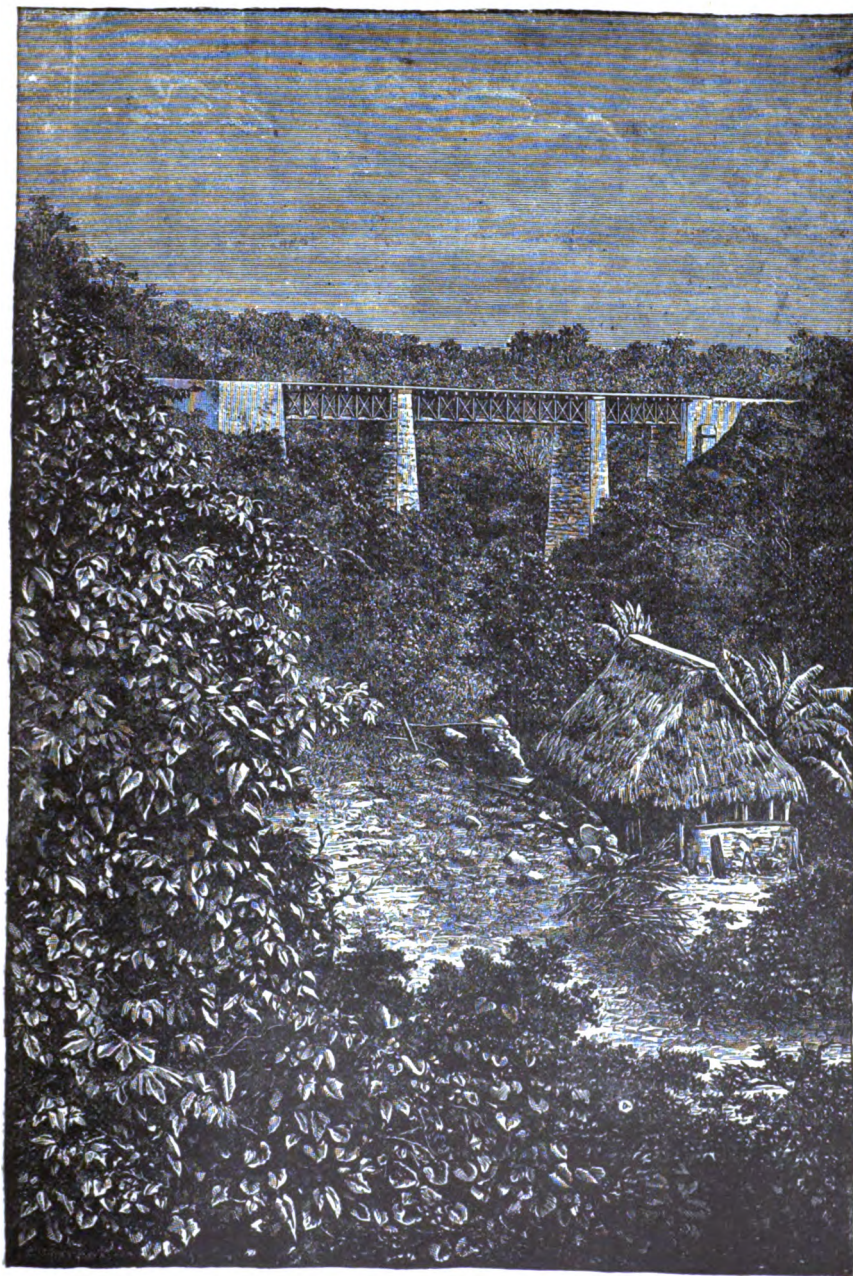
but he has a through ticket for Mexico and cannot; and at the time of his departure from the country he forgets Cordova until he reaches it again in passing through, and then regrets, too late, that he has not given it a few days' time.

The town of Cordova, being the central portion of the coffee region of the east coast, situated amidst scenery that may be taken as typical of this zone, should not be passed by without a brief description. It was founded in 1618, becoming at one time a very flourishing city, with numerous sugar haciendas, as well as numberless coffee estates; but it has greatly declined in importance. The entire coffee product amounted, in 1881, to little more than 20,000 arrobas, of twenty-five pounds each, while the amount of tobacco is estimated at from 150,000 to 200,000 arrobas. The town lies nearly a mile from the pleasant station on the Mexican railroad, with which it is connected by an excellent tramway, passing through gardens and coffee groves. The central plaza, though small, is an exquisite little garden of palms, flowers, banana plants, and orange and lime trees, kept in excellent order. It has a monument, in the centre of a large basin containing the water of the town, in memory of the patriots of Cordova who fought in the revolution against Spanish dominion; it is intersected by smooth walks, and has elegant iron seats at convenient stations. A large church opposite, though evidently of ancient date, is being repaired and somewhat modernized.

The broad open space about the plaza is used as a market, there being no other, and here the market men and women sit squatted on the stone pavement. Sunday is the great market day, for all the Indians come in from adjacent villages and take possession of the square. Many of them are pure Indians, and dressed in peculiar costumes, each tribe or village sporting a different color. They meet amicably, and generally get through the day very well; but it is when going home at night, with their skins full of *mescal*, or poor rum, that trouble occurs, and rarely a Sunday passes without several deaths.

With the reader's permission, I will anticipate by a few months my actual visit to Cordova, and bring in here, in the





BRIDGE OF CHIQUIHUIE.





sequence of our line of travel, the results of my observations in the coffee district. The coffee region of Mexico is much more extensive than is generally supposed, extending from the coast into the hills, even so high up as five thousand feet above the sea. Though the plant grows well along the coast, (as witness Liberia, where it springs up almost at the water's edge,) it flourishes best at an altitude of from one thousand to three thousand feet. This is in sections that are well supplied with rains, for warmth and moisture, so necessary to all vegetation, are required by the coffee in a greater degree than by other plants. From the fact that the elevated districts are more salubrious than the lower, and that the best coffee is produced at the highest altitudes, — within a certain limit, — we find the largest groves among the hills and mountains.

Very fortunately, at the commencement of my investigations, I fell in with an extremely well-informed gentleman, Mr. Hugo Finck, who had resided here nearly twenty years, a naturalist of deep and inquiring mind, speaking four languages, thoroughly acquainted with the whole coast and mountain country of the Gulf, and an old "coffee raiser," besides. His plantation lies about two miles from town, reached by a road in a not exactly delightful condition. I might remark here that the roads of Mexico are, as a rule, in a horrible state. The government relies so much upon the railroads to connect all important places that the carriage roads and bridle paths are neglected. Take one of our country lanes, cut ditches across it, dig deep pits in it, demolish a stone wall and cast into the centre of it, run a few streams through it, and slush the whole over so that one can hardly keep his footing on it, and you have a Mexican country road in the rainy season.

But when we reached the outskirts of the town, and the road lay between tall hedgerows of flowering trees and tangled vines, we found the air perfumed with spicy odors, and enlivened by the chirping of birds. After crossing a couple of streams, we finally reached the plantation, and walked between long rows of coffee plants. They varied in age from one year to ten, but all above two years were well laden with fruit.

I have considered well all the various enterprises, agricultural and industrial, possible in Mexico, and have come to the conclusion that, if one must come out here and labor, — if he feels a decided “call” to till the soil, — old Mother Earth will be about as generous to him in coffee culture as in anything. Whatever one embarks in, he must wait some years to see his money come back; if he choose the raising of cattle, he must wait for them to grow, for at least five years, and run the risk meanwhile of their dying or being stolen; and, besides, they can only increase in certain proportion; no cow can bear more than one or two calves a year, and no calf will grow any faster than he pleases, unless you stuff him full of expensive meal and grain. With corn, wheat, and barley, you must have hundreds of acres of land, must prepare it carefully, and hoe and weed or dress it several times during the season; and, after the crop is cut and stacked, your land is there again, barren and exposed as before, and you must go through the same process over again.

With coffee, you plant your land once, and that suffices for several years. Looking at it from my point of view, — the lazy man's outlook, — I can see nothing so inviting as coffee culture, unless it be a fat “living” in an English country church. In the first place, you buy your land, of which there is a fair supply yet to be had, at about ten dollars per acre. The soil here is mostly strong, clayey loam, with a heavy top deposit of vegetable mould, very rich and lasting. It is easily cleared, and, if not on a steep hillside, where the perpetual rains wash the humus away, retains its fertility a long while. After clearing, the plants, from six months to a year old, are set out in rows eight or ten feet wide, and about six feet apart in the row. Bananas or plantains should be set out in sufficient number to entirely shade the young plants; these are quick-growing, and produce great bunches of fruit the second year, so that a small income will be coming in from them before the coffee begins to bear. Corn and tobacco may be planted among the trees, if one is in a hurry to obtain returns from the land while his principal crop is growing; but it will be far better merely to

keep the weeds down, till the land thoroughly without planting, and do everything to enrich the soil instead of exhausting it.

Coffee two years from the seed is frequently seen here, though the trees rarely bear much before reaching the age of three years, and are not in profitable bearing till four or five. But I have seen sturdy little trees, with their slender branches well bunched with fruit and flowers at between two and three years of age. Like the orange of Florida and the lime of the West Indies, the former of which will sometimes bear at two years from the bud, and the latter at two years from the seed, little reliance can be placed upon a crop at less than three or four. The coffee is in advance of them all, however, in point of time, for, while the orange hardly reaches maturity before its tenth year, coffee will repay its owner in its sixth or seventh. An advantage in favor of coffee over orange culture is, that here there can be combined with it the raising of every other tropical fruit. Here the mango lifts its solid green head above the plantations, though giving a shade too dense to be desirable, as well as the avocado pear, and even the peach and walnut.

In Mr. Finck's *cafetal*, or coffee grounds, we may see as great a variety of trees and smaller plants as is usually found in a *jardin des plantes*, for he is an accomplished botanist, and knows every plant in this region. He is especially devoted to orchids, and has collected here the rarest species, from the snow line of Orizaba to the hot lands of the coast, keeping them in great beds in the shade, and wired to the trees with densest vegetation. For a few years past he has been introducing the cinchona, and is the first one who has done it with success. From this tree he expects eventually to derive greater profit than from his coffee. The cinchona is not indigenous to Mexico; I am moved to say this because of an article in a Western paper describing the forests of the lowlands as being full of it. In that article, detailing in glowing terms the resources of Mexico, I found several products of the country that no botanist has discovered there yet.

It is a delightful zone that combines climate and soil so har-

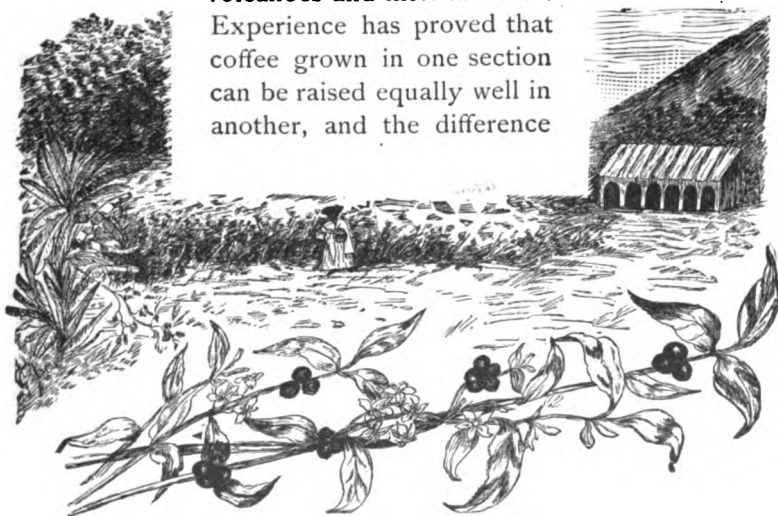
moniously that you may raise in it the fruits of any two, — of the tropic and temperate. It reminds me of the coffee region of the West Indies in vegetation, climate, scenery, and even in birds. A corner of Mr. Finck's large estate is bounded by a brook, which has hollowed a segment from a round hill, leaving a perpendicular wall of earth adorned with ferns, with interesting carludovicæ, antheriums, and tree ferns; the last waving their feathery foliage in the air with a grace inimitable. There are a score of nooks equally charming with this, which I visited in company with the learned botanist, but will not describe, because there is a young man waiting for us whose experience, though short, may prove of greater interest.

For \$3500 this young man (who, by the way, came from Illinois) has bought about fifty acres of beautiful land, more than half of it planted with trees, and in good condition. This is about the minimum, if one intends devoting himself to coffee alone, that can well support a family and prove profitable. Even then, this number of acres should be well cultivated, with very little waste land. One hundred acres would be better, in order that fifty or more might be in bearing all the time. With this young man I went out to look at his recent purchase, which lay about a mile from town, near enough to avail of all the conveniences of transportation and markets, and far enough to avoid the depredations of boys and yet get a good taste of the typical Mexican road. As we entered, we found ourselves surrounded by trees four and five years old, about five feet high, every branch loaded with glossy green bunches. The coffee, as every one knows, is not a bush, but a tree, that will grow to a height of twenty feet if permitted, but is nipped in at about six feet from the ground, thus gaining strength for the branches and main stalk, and presenting a surface from which the coffee is easily picked. Though the tree is constantly flowering and developing fruit, the proper harvest season is from November to April, — a little prolonged if carried into the latter month. The green berries turn bright red, are gathered, dried on level floors of stone or plaster in the sun, separated and hulled, and then stored. According to statistics prepared for the State Fair of Vera

Cruz, held in Orizaba in the autumn, the export of coffee from the canton of Cordova for 1880 was 5,500,000 pounds; for 1881, from 7,000,000 to 7,500,000 pounds! The area in coffee trees is constantly being added to, and the trees themselves are growing rapidly, and producing at the present time a crop yielding not far from 10,000,000 pounds. The trade is largely in the hands of New Orleans parties, who buy the berry at less than ten cents per pound.

Much is being said regarding the superiority of the coffee from Michoacan, but Michoacan is a far country, a country of volcanoes and internal strife.

Experience has proved that coffee grown in one section can be raised equally well in another, and the difference



IN CAFETAL.

between the dry climate of Michoacan and this may be obtained by a change of altitude. Coffee introduced from Liberia into the West Indies flourished just as well as it did in Africa. The planters here are not insensible to the advantages sometimes resulting from a change of seed, and are experimenting with several varieties, chiefly with some from Colima. I must confess that I never tasted worse coffee than I got in Mexico; and if it is the result of my taste having been depraved by chicory, then give me chicory.

I left my friend standing in his coffee grove, surrounded by trees high as his shoulder, far as the eye could reach. He was justly proud of his purchase, and the feeling of envy came as near having a lodgment in my breast as possible. Aside from building a house and superintending the setting out of new trees, he has little to do henceforward but to gather his crops and count the receipts. Five years is not a long time to wait, especially as small crops can be raised in the interval, which will more than pay for the labor. Five years is not long, when every year adds an appreciable height to the plants, and the second year brings spicy flowers, like bunches of arbutus, with fruit glossy as wax. The monotony of the seasons may be varied by studying out and planting the various vegetables that will grow at different times of the year. One with a taste for botany need never be at a loss, having a vast storehouse all around him in the mountains and valleys, and no winter to destroy such plants as he may collect.

We stood upon the highest part of a coffee-crowned knoll, with hills and valleys all around us, and the mighty peak of snow-crowned Orizaba towering above the clouds behind us, and planned the house, and the avenue, and the observatory that should give at a glance the entire beautiful valley. This is the bright side of the picture, and I hope no other will be presented, either to my new friend, or to any who may follow him.

The train from the coast reaches Cordova as the first rays of morning give the snow cone of Orizaba a soft rose tint. Here the people come out with coffee, fruit, and native decoctions, fondly hoping that the traveller will buy of them and break his fast. Five miles beyond the station, the train runs more slowly, as it is approaching one of the most dangerous passes on the road, and, turning sharply to the right, enters the weird and wonderful barranca of Metlac. Running along the brink of this tremendous ravine for a while, we suddenly dart to the left and cross the bridge which spans it, at a curve of three hundred and twenty-five feet radius, ninety feet above the foaming river below. Five tunnels are in sight on the opposite side before the bridge



ORIZABA, VOLCANO AND PLATEAU.



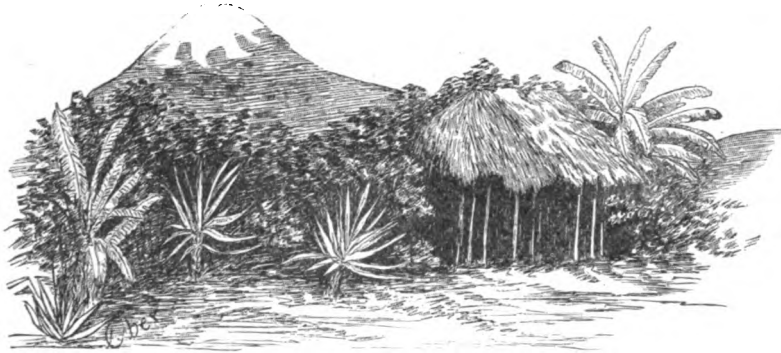


is crossed, dark holes that pierce the mountain buttresses, the first of which is taken at the end of the viaduct. Three minutes from the time we leave the right bank of the barranca we are running a parallel course, diving in and out of successive tunnels, having plunged into an immense *cul-de-sac*, as it were, on one side, and found our way out on the other. At times there are curves on which we can see the train from end to end, and all the time we are continually ascending.

From the last of the tunnels we emerge upon a great table-land, and look out over broad stretches of cultivable acres, peaceful plains dotted with cattle, billowy ranges, spurs and peaks, and, above all, the great volcano, smiling serenely upon us. How beautiful are these high plains! Right in sight is the land of snow, before us and behind us the land of tropic heat. The valley into which the great ravine opens is a vast field of coffee, rice, sugar-cane, tobacco, and corn. The area between Cordova and Orizaba is, perhaps, the most fertile and desirable to live in, in Mexico. Here the products of three zones mingle; corn and coffee interlace their leaves, peach trees lift their heads above fields of tasselled cane, and grapes and mangos grow together in blooming gardens. With a stable government and with thorough cultivation, what might not this territory attain to! The scenery is magnificent; elevated knolls along the road give desirable spots for building sites; great sugar estates are yellow with cane, good as any raised in the West Indies. Nothing is wrong or misplaced except the inhabitants, who have disfigured the face of nature with their vile habitations.

And these habitations, by the material of which they are built and their manner of construction, indicate of themselves the increase in altitude and consequent depression of the thermometer. In the *tierra caliente* they are constructed of bamboo and light poles, open alike to wind and sun, for a slight shelter suffices for the tropics. In the *tierra templada* the wood used is heavier, and the structure more durable, while the better classes, especially in the towns, are of mud or stone. On the uplands of the *tierra fria* the dwellings are of *adobe*, or sun-dried brick, and of stone.

The environs of Orizaba appear beyond, lovely so far as nature can make them, with gardens of coffee, lanes running beneath large trees, and red-roofed houses nestling beneath broad-leaved plantains. This valley, though situated four thousand feet above the sea, is yet within the limits of the *tierra caliente*. It is a trifle cooler than Cordova, less subject to fevers and to attacks from the vomito, and has inviting hotels, — inviting for Mexico, — streams, cascades, bathing-places, and good shops and markets. The climate is hot and humid, and the mosquitoes alert and vigorous; hence, the beneficial activity of the latter prevents the visitor from experiencing the enervating effect of the former. There are many churches here, all of them interesting,



A NATIVE HUT

several factories and mills, and the great machine-shops of the Mexican road, where engines are repaired and built.

The city of Orizaba, eighty-two miles from Vera Cruz, and containing about 13,000 inhabitants, is said to occupy the site of a village founded a long while ago, and conquered by Montezuma in 1457. Its original Aztec name, says one writer, was *Ahaualizapan*, or Joy of the Water, which is a slight misnomer, since the inhabitants not only do not take joy in the water here, but are indebted to it for much dysentery and fever. During the French intervention it was occupied by those interlopers from Europe, and was a favorite resort with Maximilian during his brief reign in Mexico. Mount Borrego, where one hundred

French zouaves are said to have routed five thousand men of the Mexican army, is a conspicuous object near the town. The station here is the best on the road; it is half a mile distant from the town, and connected with it by road and tramway.

Above Orizaba the rails are drawn over fertile fields and wooded hills, through a fine country, rapidly growing poorer, where they run straight away towards the hills, and then make a decided dash for the mountains. In half an hour from the small station of Encinal, we enter the gloomy gorge known as *El Infernillo*, the Little Hell, passing over dizzy banks and bridges, above a stream which has worn a deep chasm in the trap rock. A black cross on a projecting point indicates death and danger, and reminds us of the fate that awaits him who slips from the track above. Far below, gazing downward from the dizzy bridge we are crossing, upheld by slender columns, we can see a little stream dashing into a black and dismal ravine, where it is lost, until it reappears on the plain we have left. Plunging into a tunnel, we emerge at the other end into scenery radically different, for we have now reached the region of pines, more than five thousand feet above the sea. A little valley lies spread before us now, an emerald embosomed in the mountains, called *La Joya*, the Jewel, in the centre of which is the station of Maltrata. Just as the whistle sounds for this station, the volcano of Orizaba bursts upon the view again, its whole snow-white summit rising majestically above the hills. The train is met by hundreds of Indian girls and women, holding out baskets of fruit, such as peaches, pomegranates, oranges, pine-apples, avocado pears, and *tamales*, or meat smothered in corn paste, cakes, tortillas, and bottles of pulque; everything, in fact, that the Mexican taste (limited) is supposed to crave. Peach trees line the track at the station, and all the houses have gardens about them, as this is a suburb, and the town extends farther into the valley.

Beyond this the track literally *climbs* the mountain, approaching it by great curves. At La Bota, where the engine stops for water, and where they take on a supply of wood,—pine wood that gives out a resinous odor,—the down train can be

reen creeping slowly on its course, held in check by the powerful engine. All the way up the hills you can trace the road, its serpentine trail drawn in and out the valley and along the ridges, ever and anon doubling upon itself, but ever climbing. At last we reach another water-tank, perched at the crest of a ridge, after having ascended over a grade of nearly five per cent through rock cuts hung with ferns, severing the backs of the buttresses that come down from the mountains above, and through tunnels that pierce them one after another. Looking down upon the hills and dales clothed in pines and oaks, we might imagine ourselves in New Hampshire, but we are already higher than Mount Washington!

Here the view is of surpassing beauty. Far to the left the volcano rears its white peak above ranks of sombre pines, and right beneath is a variegated landscape, alternate groves, copses, fields, and garden spots, through which is traced the sinuous line of the iron road. Beyond the tank is a narrow iron bridge, ninety feet long, and spanning a chasm that ends only at the valley below. If any support should snap here, nothing could save us from being precipitated two thousand feet downward. At the bridge the fair vale of Maltrata again lies before us, though ten miles distant by the track, and nearly three thousand feet below. Glorious are the views of Maltrata obtained as the train rushes in and out the cuts. The valley is perfectly flat, divided into squares by hedges and walls, with every shade of green, with houses and trees most picturesquely grouped, waving with grain in places, and golden where the harvest is done. Exactly in its centre is a red-domed church, and a square with portals and fountain; every inch is cultivated beyond the town, where verdant valleys run up into the hills, the slopes of which are yellow with grain and brown with up-turned earth. Hill is piled upon hill, stretching away to the horizon till lost in purple haze. We are cutting the crests of a hundred ridges, crawling along the summits of mountains, now peering into dark chasms a thousand feet deep, containing streams drawn fine as silver threads, now penetrating forests of pines, black and vast.

Crossing the last terrible bridge, on a curve, as at Metlac, and diving through the last dark tunnel, we finally reach *Boca del Monte*, the "Mountain's Mouth," at an altitude of seven thousand nine hundred feet above the sea. In the last thirteen miles we have climbed over three thousand perpendicular feet; a stream, that we saw in the valley below as a foaming river, is now so narrow that a boy could leap across it, for we are at its source.

We are now fairly out upon the great upland plateau; we have passed successively through *tierras caliente* and *templada*, and are now in *tierra fria*, the cold country. After dry and bushy hills, we pass over a plain swelling into knolls covered with open oak woods, alternating with green, flower-carpeted pastures. In the centre of an emerald plain is a blue pond, with sheep and cattle feeding on the slopes around it. A few miles farther, at a point indicating one hundred and eleven miles from Vera Cruz, and nearly eight thousand feet above the sea, is the station of Esperanza. A long stop is made here for the passengers to get breakfast, which is abundant and well cooked. Here, also, the great double-ended Fairlie engine, the steam giant that has drawn us over the tremendous grades below, is taken off and replaced by a lighter American one, as the plain now extends the whole distance of one hundred and fifty miles to the capital.

Esperanza is the Spanish equivalent for Hope. The station bearing this name is situated at the beginning of a vast sandy plain, producing thin crops of grain; and as there are no other buildings than those of the station, and nothing of interest nearer than the volcanic foot-hills of Orizaba, the unfortunate traveller who is compelled to stay here for a day or two, realizes why it was called Hope, — because he hopes to find a better place beyond, and is certain he can enter none drearier. The best view of the great volcano of Orizaba is here, — that snow mountain which has been dancing attendance upon us since long before we reached the shore, and playing hide and seek with us behind the hills, all along the line. Now he is unmasked, for he shoots up from the very plains we are on,

in the morning cold and glittering, in the evening hidden by clouds.

The peak of Orizaba, according to Humboldt, attains to a height of 17,378 feet. Though not so accessible as Popocatepetl, which is four hundred feet higher, Orizaba has been several times ascended. The first ascent was by a party of American officers, in 1848; and the second, by a Frenchman, Alexander Doignon, in 1851, who found a staff with the date 1848 cut into it, and the tattered remains of a United States flag. Till then it was regarded as wholly inaccessible, and it was not until the gallant Frenchman made a second attempt (which nearly cost him his life) that the wondering natives could credit him, and award the honor of the first achievement to the modest Americans. The starting point for the peak is from the little village of San Andres, near the base of the cone, some of the inhabitants of which obtain ice from the summit.

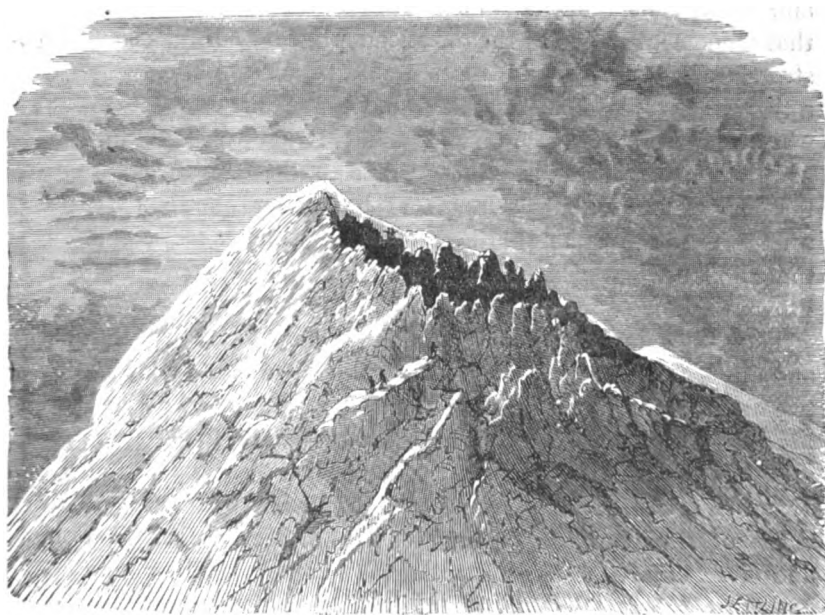
The God of the Air, Quetzalcoatl, after shaking the dust of Cholula from his shoes, and having died on the coast of Goatzcoalcos, was brought to the peak of Orizaba, and his body consumed by fire. His spirit took its flight toward heaven in the shape of a peacock, and since that time the burning mountain has borne the name of *Ciltlaltépetl*, or Mountain of the Star.

The next station of importance is San Marcos, one hundred and fifty miles from Vera Cruz, where the narrow-gauge railroad from the latter city to Puebla and Mexico, by the way of Jalapa, crosses the *Ferrocarril Mexicana*. We are now in Tlascala, that little state whose heroic people, at war with Montezuma at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, tested their invincibility in a terrible battle. Being defeated, they made a treaty with the white strangers, subsequently saving them from annihilation. We shall meet the *conquistadores* again, as we visit Tlascala, Cholula, and Mexico; they are only mentioned in this connection because, somewhere on these plains, and probably in this vicinity, we cross their line of march.

Across these sandy plains, environed by chalky hills above which rises the isolated peak of Malinche, sometimes may be

seen, in the dry season, perpendicular columns of sand and dust dancing on the surface, like water-spouts over the sea.

At the station of Huamantla, an adobe village with a large white church, one hundred miles from Mexico, as at every stopping-place on the line, groups of horsemen in leather jackets and trousers, and wide sombreros, are drawn up along the track. These are the "rural guards," who have a truly rural look indeed, and who, being better paid than the regular sol-



PEAK AND CRATER OF ORIZABA.

diers who accompany every train by the car-full, are supposed to be of greater service in case of an emergency. In fact, the regulars have been known to be perfectly oblivious of the existence of robbers, even when the latter were firing guns and pistols within a hundred feet of them, and depriving passengers of their entire possessions!

Apizaco is another adobe village, one hundred and seventy-

six miles from the coast, where there is a restaurant, and here a branch line leaves the main line for the city of Puebla. At Soltepec, seventy miles from Mexico, we are at an elevation above the sea of 8,224 feet; but, beyond, the plain gradually declines to the Mexican valley.

We have long been in the region made famous for the maguey (*Agave Americana*), and at the station of Apam, fifty-eight miles from Mexico, are in the centre of the "pulque country." Fields of wheat and barley took the place of tobacco and sugar-cane many a mile back, but these in turn yield to that wonderful native of the Mexican plateau. Immense fields stretch away on every side, unbounded by walls, but crossed by a thousand rows of the maguey, and in the distance gleam the white walls of the haciendas, fort-like structures with pierced and battlemented walls, that pertain to domains from six to ten leagues in extent. Drove of horses and herds of cattle roam the pastures in the intervalles, and blue lakes sparkle, in the rainy season, where in the dry months all is parched and brown.

The only remaining station of historic importance is Otumba, and its position has been indicated long before we reach it; for two miles away rise those gigantic pyramids of the Sun and Moon. Gliding down the fertile plains, past the shadowy pyramids, along the borders of the shallow lake, Tezcoco, under the brown hills of Guadalupe, we are at last fairly within the great valley of Anahuac, the original centre of Mexican civilization, and there before us lies the beautiful city, capital of Mexico, bathed perchance in the golden beams of the departing sun. And into this valley, the former theatre of strife between a multitude of peoples, towards which in years past the eyes of the world have been turned in amazement, we enter by the train, and roll into the suburbs of the city.



## XII.

### CITY OF MEXICO.

LEFT standing in the station, after all the passengers had departed, no coach within hail, and with no one speaking my native tongue to advise me, I knew not which way, nor how, to go. Looking about for some straw to catch at, that might float me perchance into a comfortable hotel, I saw a group of people taking leave of some would-be passengers by the return train for the coast. Drawing near them, keeping one eye on my gun-cases and trunks, I soon ascertained that they spoke English, and were moreover Americans. Suddenly there came to my ears a familiar expression, — “O yes, I’m right along in the procession!” — and I said to myself, “My gracious! there is Hooper.” Now everybody in Mexico knows Hooper, — from his frequent visits, from his facility for making acquaintance, from his jolly good nature, and his entire willingness to impart information. In truth, I have known Hooper to convey to an unsuspecting stranger intelligence of such a character as made the hair of that individual bristle with horror; and then, again, I have known him to talk so hopefully (to ladies) about the beauty, the loveliness, and the perfect security in which life and property rejoiced in Mexico, that they would declare their determination to do the country on foot and unprotected. But then it depended altogether upon what kind of information you wanted. Hooper always gave you just what you desired; you had only to tell him where you were going, and he would contrive so many and such varied delights for that place as to fairly ravish you with joy. If you wanted a gold mine in proximity to picturesque scenery, there you had it; if you wanted to slay a brigand on the road, it was just infested with them, —

not too many for comfort, but enough to furnish a spice of adventure and satisfy your appetite for blood; but if you were at all timid, and abhorred the thought of bloodshed, why that road was just a walk-over, there was not a robber within one hundred miles.

Well, in short, there was Hooper, just as lively as when I last left him on board ship, and with a host of friends down to see him off. The reception he gave me was most cordial, for Hooper is from Buncombe County, and he at once dragged me up and introduced me to his party of friends. In five minutes, it was arranged that I was to occupy the room he had just vacated at the hotel; I was introduced and consigned to the landlady thereof, and as comfortably settled as if I had known them a century. The train rolled out, bearing the generous-hearted Hooper, and his friends took me in charge and led the way to the hotel.

It is not always that one so easily effects an entrance into a strange city in a new country. The room assigned me was one after my own heart, a walled-off corner of a house-top, commanding a wide-spread view of stone-walls and roofs, and of the entire valley of Mexico. Moreover there was, right within a stone's throw, the grand cathedral, and the plaza that had been once adorned with the more ancient temple of the Aztecs. I was landed right in the centre of historic Mexico, in a position most favorable for studying and enjoying it, without previous care or wearisome house-hunting. Surely, it seems sometimes as though it were always best to drift with the stream, when once launched upon it. Gathering here my various "traps" about me, I intrenched myself in this stronghold, purposing to sally forth and attack the city leisurely, as Cortés did, putting behind me a portion at a time, till all should be conquered.

My room, as I have said, was secluded, on the roof. There was no other here, and access to it was by a single stairway, through the kitchen and servants' quarters. A single door and window gave abundant light and air; but there were also two small square holes,—one through the door and one through the thick stone wall. These were closed by means of sliding

shutters. Their use was a matter of doubt to me, and I asked a friend their meaning. Then he explained: they were loopholes; I could convert my room into a regular block-house and stand a siege. My friend told me why the room had been loop-holed. When Hooper was here, some thief came and stole a fine revolver, then he came again and took away the holster, and a few nights later carried off the cartridges. Hooper was very wroth at this, though a moment's reflection would have convinced him that no thief who thought anything of himself would care for a revolver without holster or cartridges. But Hooper got angry, though he could never get sight of the robber, and various articles disappeared from time to time.

This was during a former visit of Hooper's to Mexico, two years ago. A lady was the next occupant of this room,— a woman of nerve and determination; she had the walls loop-holed, had a bell-rope, telephone, etc. attached, and calmly awaited the robber.

He came; he shook the door gently, and tried to get it open; but this lady was ready for him. She opened fire at once, jingled the bell, and shouted through the telephone, and then sallied out, intending to surround the robber and capture him, with the aid of the party that was to come up the stairs to her rescue. During all this time she was letting off her revolver in a rather aimless way, and so the rescuing party halted beneath the stairs and inquired what she wanted. By the time they found out, after prudently waiting till her stock of ammunition was exhausted, they also found that the robber had escaped.

Information of such a character was calculated to increase my interest in the room, and to assure me of an acquaintance with a trait of Mexican character not at all desirable.

From the peculiar manner of construction of the buildings of the city of Mexico, with solid walls and flat stone roofs, all connected, a person can walk from one end of a block to the other—barring such interruptions as that lady purposed to offer—without any trouble whatever. The houses of the city are built in squares, or blocks, called *manzanas*,<sup>1</sup> 200 *varas*, or

<sup>1</sup> A *manzana* is a square measure of 100 × 100 yards.

660 feet, in length. The Hispano-Moriscan style of architecture is the same throughout the country, and gives to every city and town a resemblance to every other, with wide paved streets crossing each other at right angles and terminating in a great square in the centre. The houses, massively built, of stone, are also all after the same pattern. From the street, through a great doorway, closed at night by a barred and bolted door studded with nails, you enter the *patio*, or lower court, flagged with stone and surrounded by the stables and servants' quarters. This door is rarely wide open for free ingress and egress, but is loosely chained, and strictly guarded by the *portero*, who occupies a little room on the ground floor. This court is open to the sky, and above it are usually two ranges of living and sleeping rooms, with corridors in front, ornamented with tasteful iron balustrades, gay with flowers and vines, and sometimes cooled by the waters of a plashing fountain. Except in a house occupying a corner lot, only one wall opens upon the street, and the windows of this are well guarded with iron bars, and closely curtained; so from the outside world the families are as strictly secluded as the inmates of a prison or convent. Air, light, and sunshine they obtain from above the court, and pass their days among themselves in *négligé* and careless freedom. Above the apartments just mentioned is the roof-top, — the *azotea*, — terraced, like the roof-tops of the Orient. Here the family gather at evening time to enjoy the cool breezes, the quiet, and the gleaming stars of night.

Seated upon the *azotea*, with cool breezes playing about you, the hum of busy life in the plaza and streets coming up from below, and with soft moonlight flooding the sea of roofs on every side, — this is the time and place to bring up again the spectres of the dead and departed *conquistadores*.

We left the Spaniards at Tlascala on their way to the city of their aspirations; thence they marched upon Cholula, whence, after committing a massacre of its inhabitants, they climbed the mountains that alone separated them from the valley of Mexico, over a trail that yet exists, between the volcanoes of Popocatepetl



A PATIO.  
(The Court of the Museum.)



and Iztaccihuatl, and from the western slope of these twin mountains first beheld the stronghold of Montezuma. The sequel is of course well known to all, — that they descended to the plains below and marched towards the great lake surrounding the capital, where they were received with magnificence by Montezuma and his nobles; entered the city, where they remained several months; treacherously made captive the great and generous monarch, who was subsequently slain in an insurrection of his people; and were at length driven with great slaughter from the valley. Their entry was on the 8th of November, 1519; their expulsion, in July of the next year. Near the pyramids of Otumba, or San Juan, they were overtaken by the enraged Indians, escaping by a miracle to Tlascala, whence, after months of recuperating, and with reinforcements, they returned to the investment of the city of Mexico, in December, 1520, finally capturing it in August, 1521.

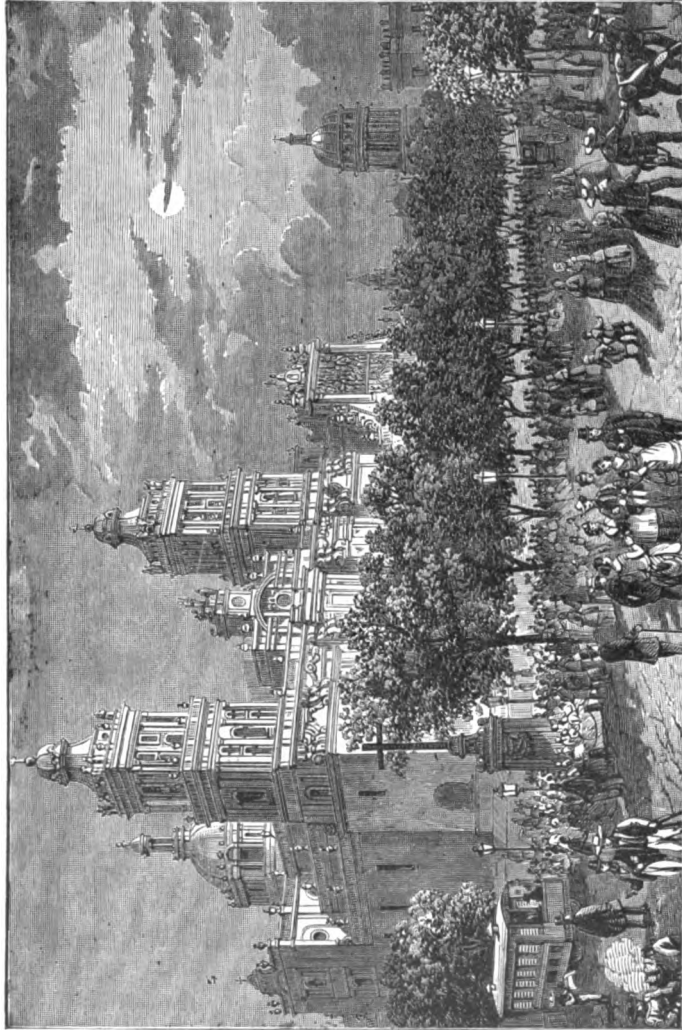
The ancient capital disappeared, for the Spaniards only took it house by house, and stone by stone, tearing down temples and palaces and filling up the canals with the *débris*; but many places remain that were identified with the conquest and with the Aztecs, and which are fully authenticated. In entering the city for the purpose of observation we naturally turn our footsteps toward the plaza mayor, the great central square, for it was also the centre of the former city, and indicated the site of the Aztec teocalli, or temple of sacrifice. Recent excavations made in the summer of 1881 have brought to light the very corner stones of this sacred edifice, and have thus vindicated the statements of early historians.

According to the best authorities, this building was a pyramidal structure, truncate, built in successive stories, each of which was reached by a flight of steps only after passing around the entire pyramid. One hundred and fourteen steps led to the square platform at the summit, about one hundred and fifty feet above the ground. This was the temple of their war-god, Mexitli, or Huitzilopochtli, and their place of sacrifice. This heathen temple was razed, and on its site, in 1530, was built a church, which was demolished in 1573 and the pres-

ent cathedral commenced, which was finished in 1667, at a total expense little short of \$2,000,000. It occupies the eastern side of the great plaza, is of the shape of a cross, 426 feet long, 200 wide, and 175 feet high, with massive towers reaching an altitude of 200 feet. Joined to it is a sister church, the Sagrario, or church of the parish, the florid and almost grotesque façade of which forms a decided contrast with the grand and imposing front of the cathedral. Until very recently, these were enclosed by a line of chains hung between about one hundred stone posts, the two corner pillars opposite the plaza supporting a cross with a ghastly emblem of death at its base, — a skull skilfully carved from marble, and an entwined serpent. This enclosure, which was a favorite resort of the bird-sellers, Indians with light wares for sale, *leperos*, and beggars, has been converted into an attractive garden. Many a time have I seen groups of dirty men and women of the proletarians crouched at the bases of these pillars, — not in worship or adoration, but engaged in threading with their bony fingers one another's hair, in eager search for that hemipterous insect so rarely seen except on the filthiest of the human species.

The interior of the grand cathedral is, even at the present day, after having been successively plundered, most magnificent. It contains five naves, six altars, and fourteen chapels, which contain the bones of some of the viceroys and departed great men of Mexico. The Glory of the Cupola, Virgin, and revered saints, were painted by celebrated artists. A balustrade surrounds the choir, of a metal so rich that an offer to replace it with one of equal weight in solid silver was refused. This weighs twenty-six tons, and came from China in the old days of Spanish dominion, when the richly freighted galleons of Spain sent their cargoes overland from Acapulco to Vera Cruz, on the way to the mother country. The high altar was formerly the richest in the world, and yet retains much of its original glory. It contained candlesticks of gold, so heavy that a single one was more than a man could lift, chalices, cruets, and pixes of gold encrusted with precious stones, censers, crosses, and statues of the same precious metal, studded with emeralds,





THE GREAT CATHEDRAL



amethysts, rubies, and sapphires. The statue of the Assumption (now missing) was of gold, ornamented with diamonds, and is said to have cost \$1,090,000. There was a golden lamp, valued at \$70,000, which it cost at one time \$1,000 to clean, but according to a French writer, — and the joke is his, — the liberal troops cleaned it out for nothing, and it has not been seen since. These treasures are merely enumerated as having once been here, for it is difficult to believe that they still occupy a place in the dazzling mass of gilding and ornament surrounding altar and choir, in a country that has passed through such trial and revolution as has Mexico. But these and much more existed, and were accumulated when bishop, priest, and monk ruled the country with a rod of iron, and possessed two thirds the entire wealth of the nation.

Enter at any time, and you may see some kneeling figure, it may be of a rich and beautiful Señora, with the purest of Castilian blood in her veins, or a miserable Indian just in from the country, with a load of vegetables, or even a coop of struggling chickens, still at his back. During the crowded attendance on feast-days and at other times, rich and poor, cleanly and filthy ones, mingle indiscriminately, and then the *lepers*, while pretending to great devotion, find it easy to relieve the wealthier members of society of their purses and handkerchiefs.

One day, when first in Mexico, Cortés ascended to the top of the teocalli,<sup>1</sup> and Montezuma, taking him by the hand, pointed out to him the various parts of the city. In like manner, let us ascend the cathedral tower and look over the selfsame valley, from nearly the same height and point of view occupied by the Spanish conqueror and the Aztec emperor. "This is a royal place," says Bishop Haven, "to see this royal city. Never had town such grand environment. Athens has mountains and sea, but scanty plains; Rome, plains, but no water, and low-browed hills; Jerusalem, mountains, but no plains nor sea. . . . The city lies all about us, its limits being equidistant in every direc-

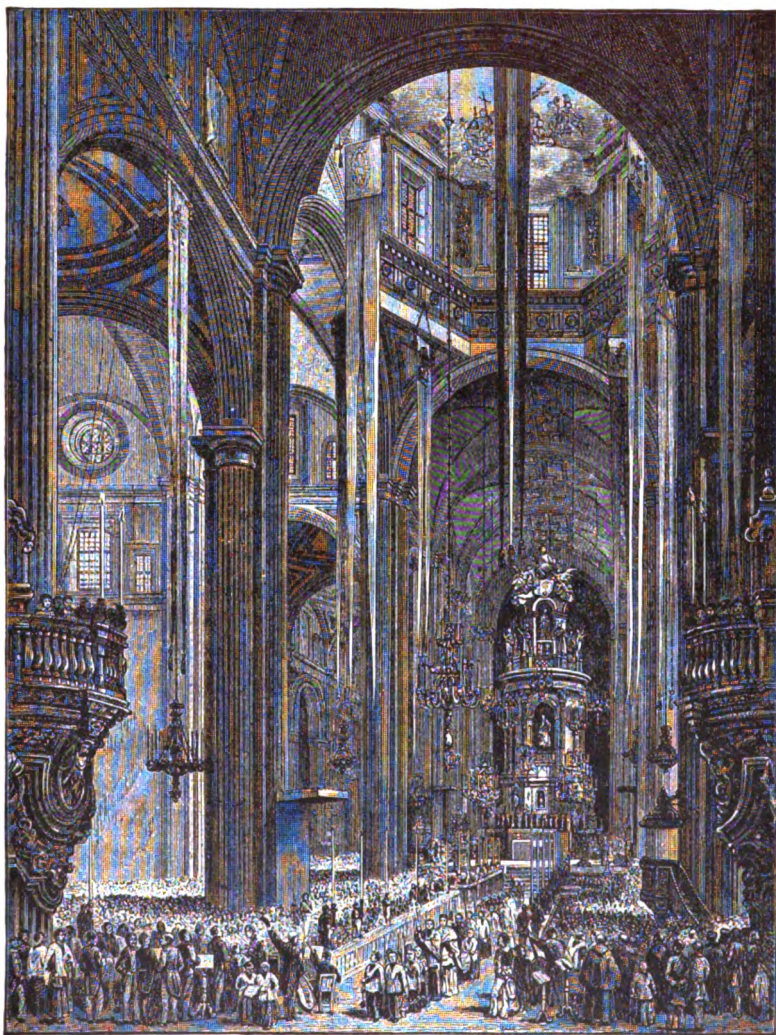
<sup>1</sup> "The teocalli was in ruins a few years after the siege of Tenochtitlan, which, like that of Troy, ended in the almost total destruction of the city." — Humboldt.

tion. Its flat roofs extend for a mile, domed with spacious churches."

Says a celebrated French traveller: "Mexico is a grand city, in the Spanish style, with an air more inspiring, more majestic, more metropolitan, than any city of Spain except Madrid, crowned by numerous towers, and surrounded by a vast plain bounded by mountains. Mexico reminds one somewhat of Rome. Its long streets, broad, straight, and regular, give it an appearance like Berlin. It has some resemblance to Naples and Turin, yet with a character of its own. It makes one think of various cities of Europe, while it differs from all of them. It recalls all, repeats none."

"The second day," says Mr. Ward, England's former Minister to Mexico, "made converts of us all; in the course of it we visited most of the central parts of the town, and, after seeing the great plaza, the cathedral, the palace, and the noble streets which communicate with them, we were forced to confess, not only that Humboldt's praises did not exceed the truth, but that amongst the various capitals of Europe there were few that could support with any advantage a comparison with Mexico."

Elevated at this height above the plaza, of nearly one hundred and eighty feet, the din of the city reaches our ears, — the hum of myriad voices, the patter of thousands of feet, and the rattle of coach-wheels over the pavements. Yet it is a rather silent crowd that fills the square, composed in great part of idle vagabonds who have no employment, and hence are in no hurry, and create no bustle. Directly beneath us is the great square, with the smaller one, the *socalo*, or pleasure garden, in its centre. This latter is a green spot in this desert of stone, its tall trees shading marble walks, statues, fountains, and flowers, beautifully disposed about a central kiosk used as a music stand. The flower market, occupying a small iron building of graceful architecture, is held here, and a small octangular structure is the despatching office of the street railways, which, radiating in every direction, reach every available and desirable suburb. All the streets of the city seem to meet in, and take their departure



INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL.



from, the *plaza mayor*, — some broad and some narrow, but all paved and straight, and lined with high buildings of stone. The structures themselves are built mainly of *tetzontli*, a porous amygdaloid of dark color obtained from ancient quarries near the city, which, as it unites firmly with mortar, is more in request than any other for the buildings of the capital.

The cathedral occupying the northern side of the square, we have on our left, forming the entire eastern boundary of the plaza, the great national palace, over twenty-eight hundred feet long, and containing an infinite number of rooms. In a portion of this building — which is said to occupy the site of the ancient palace of Montezuma, or rather of Axayacatl, his royal sire, one room of which held three thousand persons — is situated the meteorological observatory, conducted by eminent scientific men. It is likely to be of great use to the scientific world; for, remember, we are here elevated some seven thousand feet nearer the heavens than in Greenwich or Washington; the air is consequently clearer, the stars brighter, and the moon and planets larger, than there. Add to this the fact — which must have been already observed — that there are no chimneys here, no smoke, and little dust, and we can imagine the perfect transparency of the pure ether through which these meteorologists and their brothers, the astronomers of the School of Mines and Chapultepec, gaze upon the other worlds outside of ours. Several companies of soldiers are constantly quartered here, who are paraded in front of the palace every morning as the clock strikes eight. Though sentinels stand guard at every portal, free access may be had to all portions of the great building upon application, and the admirer of relics of defunct imperialism may, for a *real*, look upon the state coach of Maximilian, yet preserved as a useless curiosity. The palace is the official residence of the President of the nation, and contains the offices of himself and his ministers and military commanders, and also the treasure of the nation and its archives.

In the botanical garden attached to the palace is a curious plant, called *el arbol de las manitos*, the tree of the little hands. It is the *Cheirostemon platanifolium* of the botanists, and the

*Tsapalilqui-Xochitl* of the ancient Aztecs, one of whose kings went to war with another petty monarch to obtain possession of it. It bears a beautiful red flower, the centre of which is in the form of a hand, with the fingers bent a little inward. Only three trees of the kind are said to exist in all Mexico, two in the botanical garden, and one (the mother plant) in the mountains of Toluca.

Directly opposite the cathedral, at the southern side of the plaza, is the municipal palace, supported, like the buildings bounding the greater portion of the western, upon the picturesque *portales*, or arcades, — a feature in the architecture of the public buildings of this country, as we have seen in Yucatan. Here the tide of human life flows at the full; every available corner is occupied by some huckster, beggar, or pedler, and all the native products of the land are displayed for sale outside and in the adjacent shops. Everything manufactured in Mexico is before us here, from a sombrero, with a brim a yard wide, loaded with silver, and costing fifty dollars, to a sarape, or Mexican blanket, of gay colors, and equally expensive.

Lifting our eyes from the scene of animation spread below, and letting them wander over the stone walls that surround us on every side, like a coral plain rent into chasms, we note another verdant square to the westward. This is the *alameda*, the forest garden of Mexico, which is older than the *zocalo*, and has larger trees, finer flowers, grander fountains, and more elaborate walks and garden plots. Here the good citizen of Mexico resorts at least once a day for a walk, the nurse with her charge, and the omnipresent policeman, the student with his book, and the lawyer with his client. This most charming spot, where once apostates were punished with fire, — for heretics were burned here by the Inquisition, — is but the beginning of the city westward and southwestward, towards the hills that approach the valley from that direction.

Letting our gaze wander on, we look beyond the brown plains and green fields, intersected by lines of trees, roads, and aqueducts, and dotted with the white walls of scattered villages, — beyond all these, to the hills that enclose us on every side. It



is a view too grand for simple description, too vast, even, for an artist to grasp and depict on a single canvas; and I hesitate to attempt more than separate portions of it at a time.

We occupy the central portion of a valley in the cordilleras of Anahuac, fifty-five miles in length by thirty in breadth, and enclosed by a wall of mountains two hundred miles in circumference. This rugged barrier circumscribes our view in every direction; amethystine hills of lovely hue, without a break or change in color except far to the southeast, where the two great volcanoes raise their snow-covered peaks to heaven. Between us and them is spread every variety of surface that ever rejoiced the eye of an admirer of nature, in the hills crested with groves, the plains and valleys gemmed with lucent lakes. The great Lake Tezcoco, which formerly surrounded the city, lies now at a distance of three miles from it, sleeping in the sunshine, with the haze of distance enwrapping its farther shore. This is the salt-water lake; farther south are the fresh-water bodies of Xochimilco and Chalco. The hills nearest us are those at the base of which the church and chapel of Guadalupe are built on the north, and of Chapultepec, lying to the west. Both points are historic, the one in the comparatively modern days of the conquest, the other in its connection with ancient peoples and scenes of recent days.<sup>1</sup>

In looking over this vast valley, and the wide area of denuded meadows that surrounds the city, we cannot avoid the conviction that the early chronicles were truthful in their descriptions of Mexico as having been built upon an island. Various doubters have affected to disbelieve this fact, even though every proof is present that the surroundings could afford, aside from the statements of many writers. The Aztec chronicles state that they made their permanent stay on an island, or group of islands, northeast of Chapultepec, and the writings of the Spaniards who were eyewitnesses to the events attending the destruction of the old city and the founding of the new positively assert that both were upon an island intersected

<sup>1</sup> See Frontispiece, for an accurate engraving of Anahuac, or the historic Valley of Mexico.

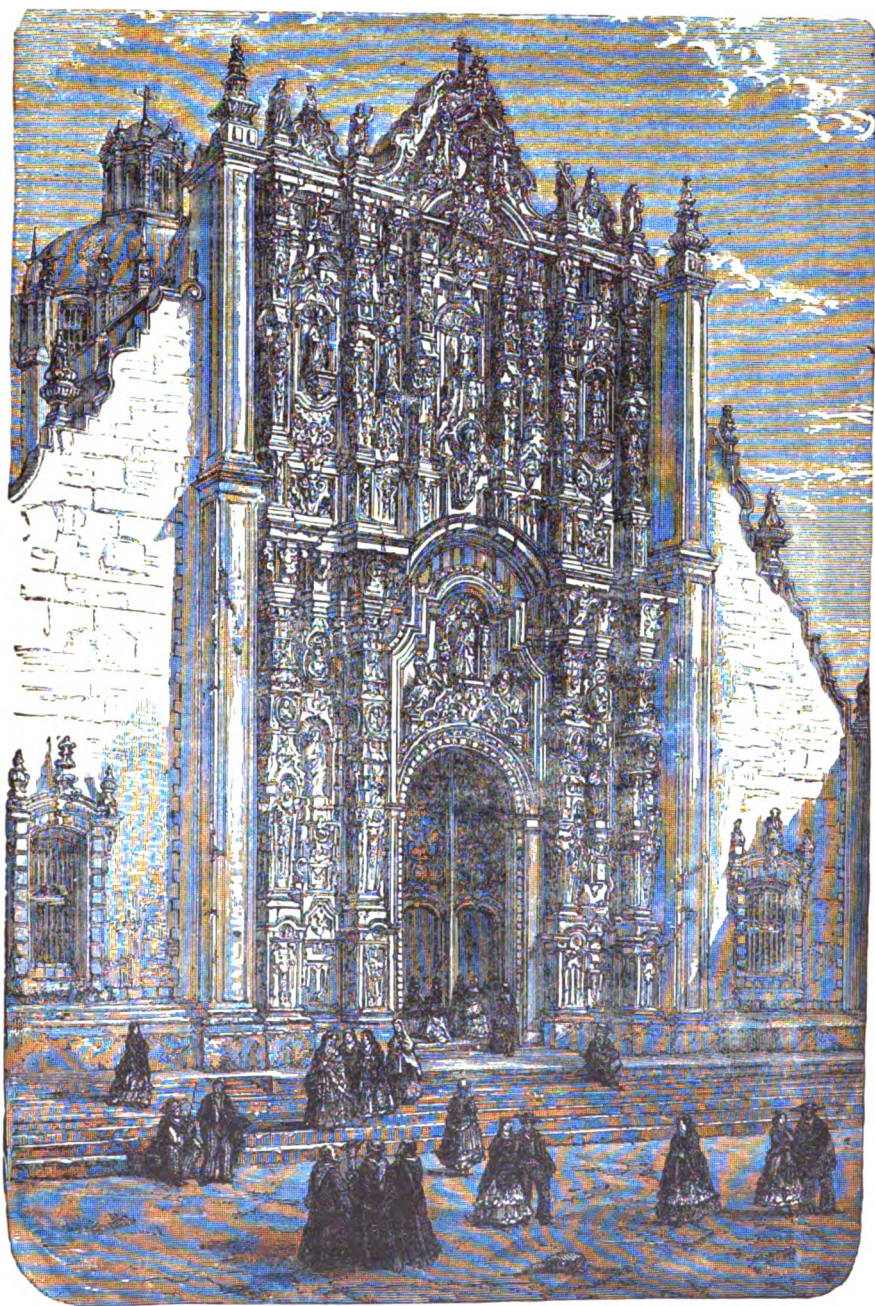
by canals.<sup>1</sup> The circumstances attending the entry of the Spaniards are narrated at length by Bernal Diaz. After descending the mountains and passing through Amecameca and Chalco, they skirted Lake Tezcoco<sup>2</sup> by the base of the line of hills southeast of the city, and approached from the direction of Lake Chalco. After having been met by Montezuma in great state, with his nobles, they were conducted to the city. "We then set forward," says the old soldier, "on the road to Mexico, which was crowded with multitudes of the natives, and arrived at the causeway of Iztapalapa, which leads to the capital. When we beheld the number of populous towns on the water and firm ground, and that broad causeway running straight and level to the city, we could compare it to nothing but the enchanted scenes we had read of in 'Amadis of Gaul,' from the great tower and temples, and other edifices of lime and stone which seem to rise out of the water."

Humboldt says that the ancient city communicated with the continent by the three great dikes of Tepejacac (Guadalupe), Tlacopan (Tacuba), and Iztapalapa. Cortés mentions four dikes, because he reckoned, without doubt, the aqueduct (and causeway) which led to Chapultepec. To simplify the position, imagine a causeway reaching the city from the south-east, another leading out of it to the north, and another west, besides the aqueduct to Chapultepec (a little south of west), which may have been built upon another causeway.

Upon the ruins of the Aztec capital, therefore, after the siege had ended, the Spaniards laid the foundations of the modern city, still on an island, connected with the main only by the dikes, but with many of its canals choked with the material of ruined buildings. This "Venice of the Western world," as many authors have styled this centre of civilization in Lake Tezcoco, lost thereby its water-ways, which served in place of streets, and not many years passed before it was found to be in danger of

<sup>1</sup> The curious reader will find many particulars of historic information, such as dates of arrival of the tribes which successively invaded the valley of Mexico, etc., in the author's "Young Folks' History of Mexico," the later edition of which is carefully indexed.

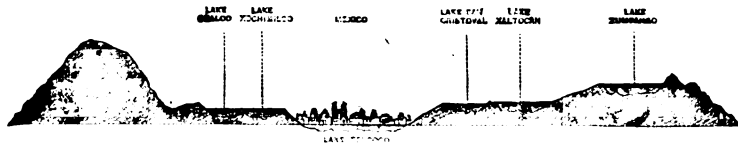
<sup>2</sup> Written Tezcoco, or Texcoco, and pronounced Tesh-có-co.



EL SAGRARIO.  
( adjoining the Cathedral.)



inundation. It has passed through several floods, the severest of which was that of 1629, which great inundation lasted till 1634; boats passed through the streets as of old, and, though the most holy image of the Virgin of Guadalupe was brought into the city for the purpose of drying up the waters, it was a long while before they subsided, and chiefly through the influence of earthquakes.<sup>1</sup> At the corner of the street of San Francisco and the *Calleon del Espiritu Santo*,—Alley of the Holy Ghost,—there is the golden head of a lion, grim and dumb, that marks the height, about six feet, reached by the waters in 1629.



RELATIVE LEVELS OF LAKES AND CITY.

There was a physical cause for these periodical floods in the comparative levels of the city and the lakes that occupy a goodly portion of the valley of Tenochtitlan, or Mexico. In the Plaza de Armas you may find to-day a monument (that was only unveiled in the summer of 1881) to one of Mexico's great hydrographers, containing on its four sides the heights of the lakes of the valley, the stage of the water in Lake Tezcoco, and other information of a hydrographic nature. There are six of these lakes;—Chalco and Xochimilco, the southernmost, whose levels are ten feet above that of Tezcoco, the largest and nearest, but six feet below the pavement of the city at ordinary stages of water; San Christobal, a small lake north of Tezcoco, and Xaltocan and Zumpango, in the northern end of the valley, at an elevation of twenty-five feet above the city. In order to save the city, it was considered necessary to divert the waters of Lake Zumpango—which flowed into Tezcoco, a lake without an outlet, and were a perpetual menace to the capital—in another direction, through the mountain wall

<sup>1</sup> The city itself has been seven times inundated, in 1446, 1553, 1580, 1604, 1607, 1617, 1629; and five times partially submerged, in 1620, 1630, 1748, 1819, and 1865.



that enclosed the valley, into the River Montezuma, which empties eventually into the Gulf of Mexico. A great tunnel was commenced, in 1607, with 1500 Indians, and completed within a year, its length being more than 6,600 metres (21,650 feet). The falling in of the tunnel was the cause of the great inundations that submerged the city, and attempts were made to convert it into a trench; but this latter undertaking was not finished until 1789, nearly two centuries after its commencement.



TAJO DE NOCHISTONGO.

The great trench is from 30 to 160 feet in depth, and in some places 300 feet broad, and is known as the *Desagüe de Huehuetoca*, or the *Tajo* (Cut) *de Nochistongo*. Instead of carrying away the waters of the lower lakes, the great canal only drained Zumpango and a river which was diverted into it, leaving Tezcoco and Chalco unaffected directly by the drainage. It, however, relieved the city from apprehension regarding the danger that would have resulted from a sudden overflow of the upper lake into Tezcoco; and by taking away the main tribu-

tary of the latter, in conjunction with its great evaporation, its area has been greatly diminished, so that, instead of surrounding the city as in former days, its nearest shore is three miles from it, measuring from the plaza.

For three hundred years the sewers of the city have attempted to discharge into the lake; and though the latter has gone on evaporating all this while, yet the flow of filth has never ceased, and the level of the lake still remains but six feet below that of the city. The sewers are constantly charged; beneath the pavement of the city of Mexico is the accumulated filth of near five hundred years! As a consequence, despite the rarity of the atmosphere at this high altitude, malaria spreads itself upon the air, and fevers of a mild type prevail here.

Numberless plans have been submitted to the government for draining the lake and relieving the city of its surcharge of corruption; some have been accepted, but none have been attempted, though a fund for the purpose was started years and years ago. A wealthy American company was the latest to bid for this contract, and even went so far as to obtain a liberal concession from Congress and the Executive. Through the city of Mexico, by this plan, sewers are to be constructed flushed by the waters from the lakes, which are carried to a common conduit, where the sewage is purified by deposition, the solid matter to be used for fertilization and the water carried away in the canal. The whole length of the canal would be about fifty miles, the expense about \$7,000,000.

Having now a period of peace and prosperity, with a friendly nation kindly building all her railroads necessary to develop internal commerce, Mexico will undoubtedly turn her attention to the purification of her capital, that it may become in future years the Mecca of pilgrims in search of health, as well as of those looking for magnificent scenery.

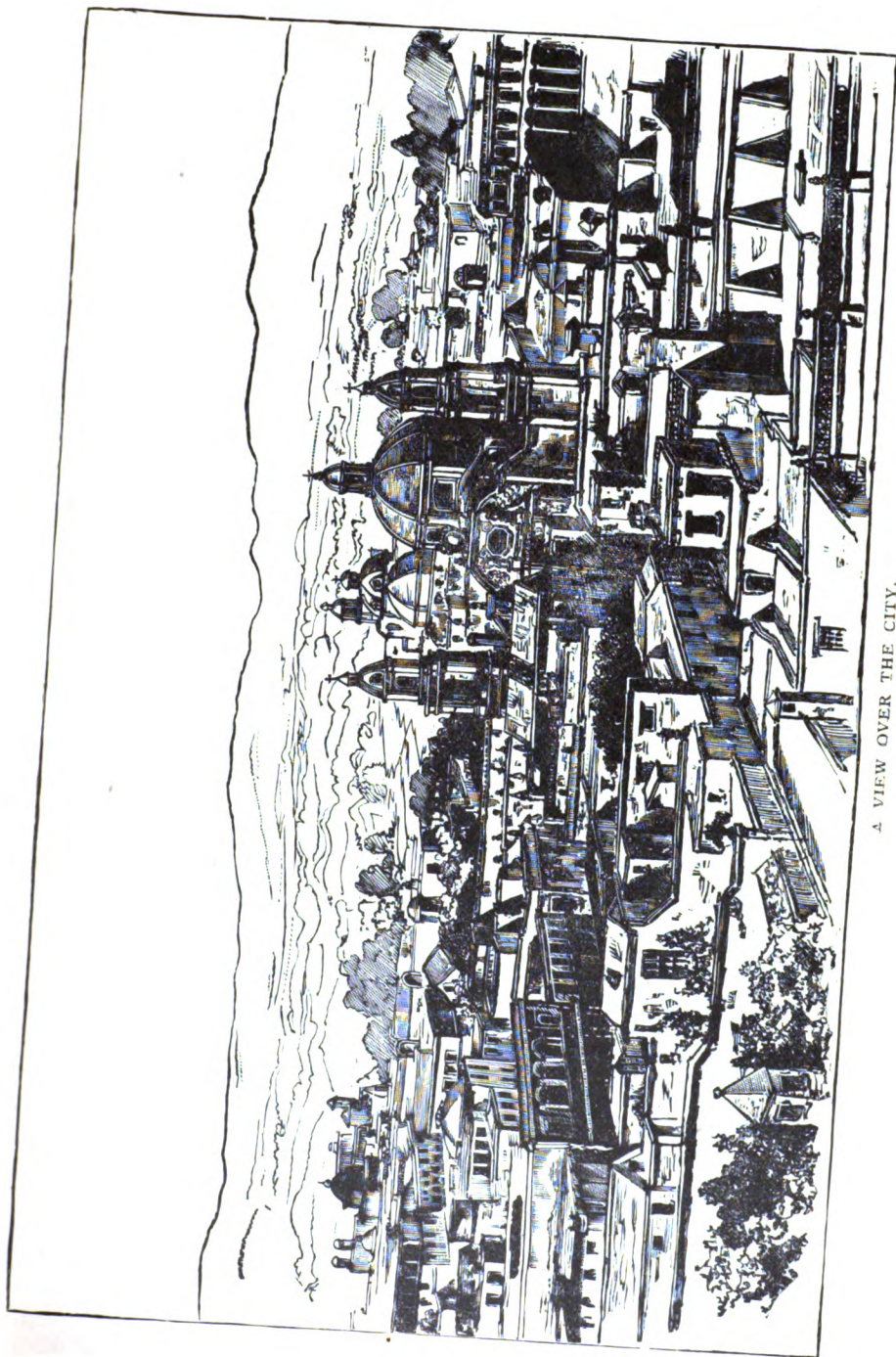
### XIII.

#### A RAMBLE AROUND THE CITY.

**T**HIS city of nearly three hundred thousand inhabitants lies in latitude  $19^{\circ} 26'$  north of the equator, and at an elevation above the sea of seven thousand four hundred feet. Its situation, within four degrees of the tropic of Cancer, would give it, so far as geographical position is concerned, a climate like that of Havana, without its sea-breezes; but the isothermal line is here deflected northward by the greater altitude. The temperature ranges between 65 and 85 degrees, varying little with the seasons; the mornings and nights are cool, while at midday it is always hot, and the difference between sunshine and shade is very great. The climate is strictly temperate and nowhere in the world do the periodical alternations of rain and drought occur with greater regularity.

The so-called rainy season extends from June to November, and is the most delightful period of the year, especially at its commencement and towards its termination. The latter month, November, is cool and pleasant, and indicates that the season has arrived when visitors from other countries can enter Mexico without fear of encountering deadly disease, and with the prospect before them of a full winter of dry weather. It is in May or June that "muttered thunders announce the coming of the rains, and all nature looks expectantly for the approaching showers"; the dry, brown hills take on a carpet of green in a single night; the beds of water-courses, for months without a drop of water in them, are in a few days the channels of furious streams. The animals of the hills and plains rejoice at the recurrence of the period of rain, for their pastures then afford them an abundance of succulent herbage. The eye of





A VIEW OVER THE CITY.



man is delighted with verdure and the bloom of flowers, which clothe the valleys and brighten the gardens. At the close of this season the migratory birds arrive from the north; great flocks of ducks and plover, which betake themselves to the lakes and marshes, where they afford an abundance of food for the Indians and much sport to the denizens of the city.

Even long journeys are pleasantest in this season, especially in the northern portion of the republic, except for the occasional disadvantages of swollen streams and flooded roads. By timing the hours of travel so that a start is secured before daylight, and halting by the middle of the afternoon, the rains are avoided, as they invariably fall between noon and sunset, except at the beginning of the season. In a journey of above a thousand miles on horseback, through Southern Mexico, in the height of the rainy season, myself and companions got wet scarcely a dozen times, though in the saddle every day. In the city of Mexico, the encircling mountains, by their position and great height, precipitate many showers that do not fall in places outside the valley, as in Puebla, for instance, which has a much smaller rainfall.

From the contiguity of the mountains to the valley, also, the rains here assume a violence that at times is tremendous, filling the streets of the city, and flooding the parks and plazas. In a single shower, lasting but an hour or so, I once saw the main street of Mexico filled knee-deep, and every one caught out in it had to hire a coach with which to reach his home. This was owing not only to sudden precipitation, but to the defective drainage of the city, which would not allow of the carrying away of the water in sufficient volume. Even the contents of the sewers were floated into the streets, and washed into the doorways of many stores and dwellings. On the occurrence of such sudden rainfalls, the porters of the city transform themselves into beasts of burden, and carry ladies and gentlemen from one crossing to another, for a few *centavos*, on their backs. They are rascals, many of them, who have been known to suspend an unlucky passenger above the water till he agreed to give a generous *douceur* for the privilege of landing, or keep

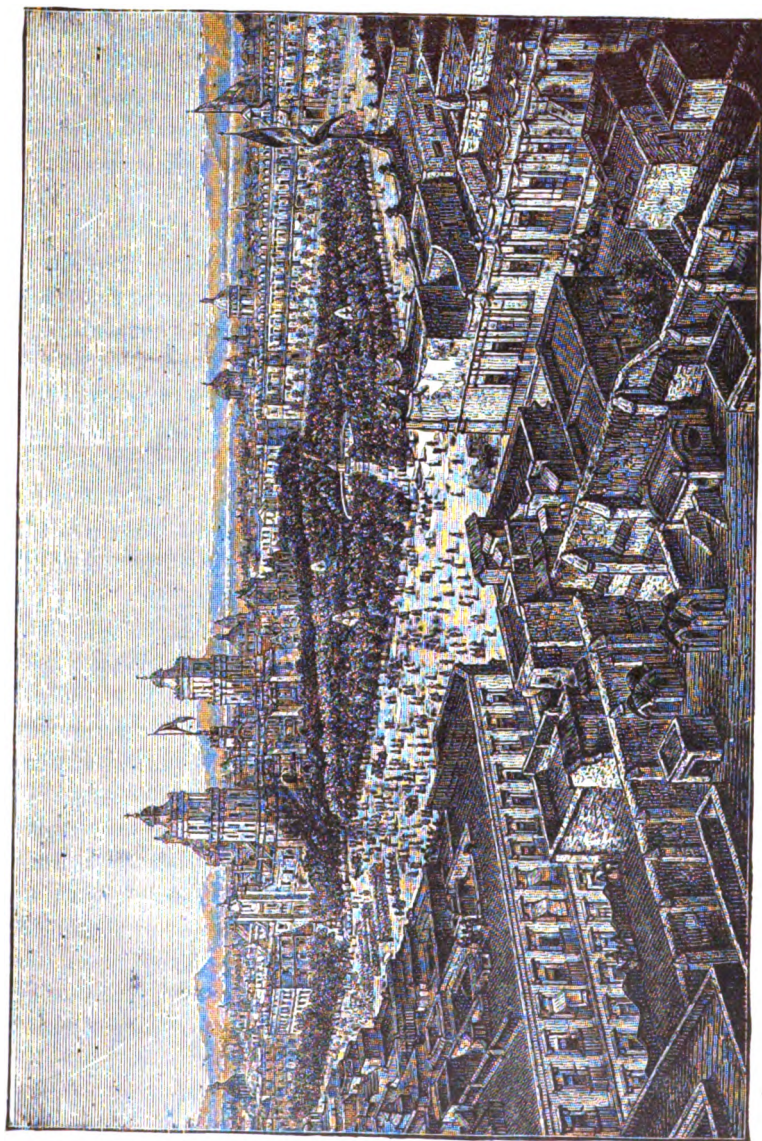
him in this defenceless position till a companion has found and got away with his purse or watch.

From its great elevation, combined with its geographical position, Mexico (the city) has a most perfect climate. Except for the local influences, previously mentioned, the atmosphere is dry and pure. Many people affect to suffer from the rarefaction of the air; but it is believed that, if they had been transported here without knowing of the change of altitude, they would breathe as easily as at the coast. The air is so transparent that objects at a distance seem close at hand; many writers have noticed the deceptive appearance of the hills, which can be seen at the termination of every street as though within an hour's walk, when in reality twenty miles away; and the two great volcanoes, though seemingly within cannon-shot, are all of fifty miles distant.

The brisk electric condition of the air may account for the animation of the people, both native and foreign residents, who are always stirring, except at noon, and always cheerful. Despite the exhilarating atmosphere, to breathe which is a perfect delight, there is a universal cessation of active business at noon, (though morning is early devoted to work, and evening to recreation,) as the *siesta* imperatively asserts its claims, and everybody retires for an hour or two to couch or hammock. The longest day of the year being but thirteen hours, and the shortest eleven, this almost equal division of time between day and night greatly facilitates plans for business and amusement. Everything goes on with clock-work regularity, and the inhabitants of the great city rise, eat, work, snooze, dance, and retire at stated hours. Honest men profit by this regularity to despatch their labors with their fellow-men when they are most accessible, and after dark those who are not honest know where and when to find victims to fleece or murder, without losing sleep, or shivering all night in the cold.

With this brief digression, as explanatory of the sanitary condition of the city, let us continue our sight-seeing. Having started with the *plaza mayor*, it would perhaps be well to work outwards from it, and take the most distant places last. Diago-





THE PLAZA.  
(As it appeared in 1860.)



nally opposite the zocalo in the centre of the Plaza, and facing the western wall of the cathedral, is the most beneficent institution in Mexico, — in the world, — the Monte de Piedad. It is a pawn-shop on a gigantic scale, erected for the benefit of poor people and worthy members of the shabby-genteel class, whose ancestors were once wealthy, and left them money which they have squandered and property they fain would realize upon. It was founded by the famous Count of Regla, who gave three hundred thousand dollars for the purpose, in order that the poor and needy might obtain advances upon personal property at a low rate of interest. This is deposited as security, the sum advanced upon it being fixed by two valuers, as near as possible to about three fourths its real value. Should the interest cease to be paid, the article is kept seven months longer, when a price is fixed, and it is exposed for sale; five months later, if not sold, it is offered at public auction, the sum it brings in excess of the advance upon it and the added interest being placed to the credit of its owner, and subject to his order, or that of his heirs, for one hundred years, after which it reverts to the bank.

The original capital of this charitable institution has more than doubled, and the amount of good that it has done in the century and more of its existence is incalculable. If Mexico had no other great charity than this, the fact of its existence, and that it has been allowed to carry on uninterrupted business through civil wars and changes of government, revolutions and counter revolutions, speaks volumes in favor of Mexican foresight and forbearance. The family gods of the country — rich garments, saddles, swords, gold ornaments, diamonds, pearls, and rubies — are collected here. Sometimes great bargains are secured at the sales and by private purchase, but not often, as the valuers are shrewd and careful men, who, it is said, have to make good any loss to the bank from undervaluation. But there are often deposited here gems that have an historic, added to their intrinsic value, — some say, many jewels that have flashed from the robes of royalty. The great building occupies the site of the palace of Cortés, built for him soon after the conquest; and one cannot go amiss in paying it a visit.

Notwithstanding the presence here of an establishment that will advance upon nearly everything a fair percentage of its value, the smaller dens of "My Uncle" flourish in abundance. They may be found on every street, and on some streets in every block, displaying a more heterogeneous assortment of stuff than the mind of man can conceive of. They will take anything offered them, and the majority are in league with thieves and pickpockets, who deposit their "takes" with them until pursuit is over, and they can be profitably disposed of. The police are cognizant of this, and keep up a rigid inspection of the pawn-shops, though the rascals generally evade responsibility whenever found with stolen goods. An American dealer in hardware told me that he lost more through the pawn-shops than in any other way; for young men, of apparent respectability, have repeatedly bought revolvers, knives, etc. of him on credit, and had them in the pawn-shops before the day had closed. It is owing to such losses as these that dealers in American goods, hardware especially, charge for them four times the price asked in New York — in order that the Mexican fop may keep up appearances.

Another large building, built with laudable intentions, but which has failed to completely realize the purposes of its founders, is the *Mineria*, or School of Mines. Mexico has better provided for her sons in respect to education than foreigners generally give her credit for, and this School of Mines is only one of many institutions throughout the republic for the training of young men in practical engineering and mining. Though often praised as a building of stately architecture, which would be considered a grand structure in any country, the *Mineria* fails to convey that impression now; and when told that it cost a million and a half of dollars, and that it is the work of the great architect and sculptor, Tolsa, we only wonder at the genius of a man who could conceal so much money in such an unimposing building. Here General Grant was entertained during his first visit to Mexico, in 1880, when he was the guest of the people.

There is a fine collection of the products of the mines here,



a good library, astronomical and meteorological apparatus, educated professors, trained assistants, and some of the most charming young men as students that it has been my fortune ever to meet. One of them, I remember, who bore the name of Cortés, having been detailed by his teacher to show me over the building, displayed such tact, courtesy, and intelligence that I shall never forget him. This treatment of a stranger is universal, and one's heart warms at the recollection of attentions received from these gentlemen of the educational institution of Mexico. In this connection, I should not fail to mention the officers in charge of the meteorological observatory in the Palace. Educated in every detail of their profession, maintaining a leading position among the scientific men of the day, they are making the influence of their observations felt, especially in the United States. But, though busied with their duties night and day, I never found them so much engaged as not to have time to answer questions, or give the greatest consideration to my requests.

The principal street of Mexico, on or near which are its largest hotels, its finest stores and restaurants, and some of its richest private dwellings, is the *Calle de San Francisco*, known also as *Calle de los Plateros*, or Street of the Silversmiths, and by various other names. The vexatious plan, formerly pursued, of giving every different block of a street *a different name*, is now being abandoned; a more improved system is about to be adopted; and in a few years, it is hoped, one may be able to find the number he is in search of in any particular street without spending hours about it, as now is necessary. In San Francisco Street are some of the most richly-stocked stores in Mexico, where, despite the almost prohibitory duties on foreign goods, articles from every land on earth are accumulated. Half-way down this street is the grand Hotel Iturbide (pronounced Eé-tur-bé-dee), once the palace of the first emperor after Mexico became independent.

This hotel is patronized by such American visitors as worship at things smacking of royalty; not because it is comfortable, not because it is cheerful even, — for it is scarcely less gloomy than

a tomb,—but because it is “the thing” to be there. Even clerks on scant salary, engineers who have come out on ventures, artists, correspondents of newspapers, railway contractors, — all may be found within the precincts of Iturbide, that they may write home to their poor relations, “I have dwelt in the abode of an emperor.” Grand and gloomy, with a façade noteworthy for nothing except its long, protruding water-spouts, with an interior mainly attractive for its wide court, with dirty *mozos* or men-servants as chambermaids, bare floors, and gaunt bedsteads, there is nothing to attract one to Iturbide, except, perhaps, the drinks dispensed at its bar, which, like the climate, are delicious and vivifying. In describing one hotel, we describe all, for they are all built and managed after the same plan. The cafés, which are conducted apart even if in the same building, are excellent.

Illustrating the departure in a modified way from the architecture of older Mexico, such a house as that of the millionaire Escandon is a fine specimen, though even this structure exemplifies the manner in which the Mexican utilizes his dwelling-place, as the lower floors are occupied by stables and the offices of the Mexican railway. Near this abode of wealth is a peculiar, though effective, tile-covered block, which glistens in the sun like the porcelain domes of Vera Cruz. Historic and beautiful buildings abound near this centre, for only a stone's throw away is the great pile built long ago by the Franciscans, a conventual structure which they lost when their property was secularized, and which is now owned and used by two Christian religious corporations. The missionary work instituted here by the Rev. Dr. Butler is now successfully carried out by his son, and this Methodist rallying place for Protestants is in a flourishing condition. Halls and cloisters, once the resort of unctuous, holy monks, are now filled with active workers in the good cause, and with the material for the lively propagation of the Gospel. The most attractive portion is that facing the Calle de San Francisco, and owned by the Episcopal Church.

A little way distant, a few streets to the south, is another convent, likewise to be put to a use more in accordance



HOTEL ITURBIDE.



with the demands of the times. A magnificent building has just been repaired, and in a measure reconstructed, for the reception of one hundred thousand or more volumes, which are to constitute a national library, with such additions as the future may bring. The books are mostly the spoils from other convents and religious establishments, and though mainly of a character more suited to monks and recluses than to the student of to-day, yet there are many volumes of great rarity and value pertaining to the early history of this country. While upon this subject, I might remark that Mexico is yet full of old and rare religious books. In the book-stalls, which are daily erected around the great cathedral, and nightly taken away, I have often purchased odd works of forgotten, but once famous authors. The keepers of these temporary establishments are shrewd and well informed on the value of books, from a Mexican standpoint; but as they are mostly illiterate, and judge of the value of a book more by the eagerness of a customer than from the reports of trade sales or catalogues, they often sell for a mere song volumes worth their weight in silver.<sup>1</sup>

If this were only a dissertation on old books, I might go on describing treasures that would make a bibliophile's eyes water; but as my object is merely to show my readers how they may see Mexico and its possessions to the best advantage, I repress this inclination to indulge in a favorite vanity.

Of old houses there are many about which the antiquary and the artist might love to linger. Perhaps that one in which Humboldt dwelt while here, in the Calle San Augustin, is sought out most persistently. It is made conspicuous by an inscription over the door. Humboldt, as one writer has well remarked, is indeed an honorary citizen of the capital, and achieved more for Mexican independence with his pen than many others combined with the sword. Coming up from South America, he landed on Mexican soil in March, 1803, and remained a year in the country. Though he only visited such points as were of easy access from the capital, he nevertheless so

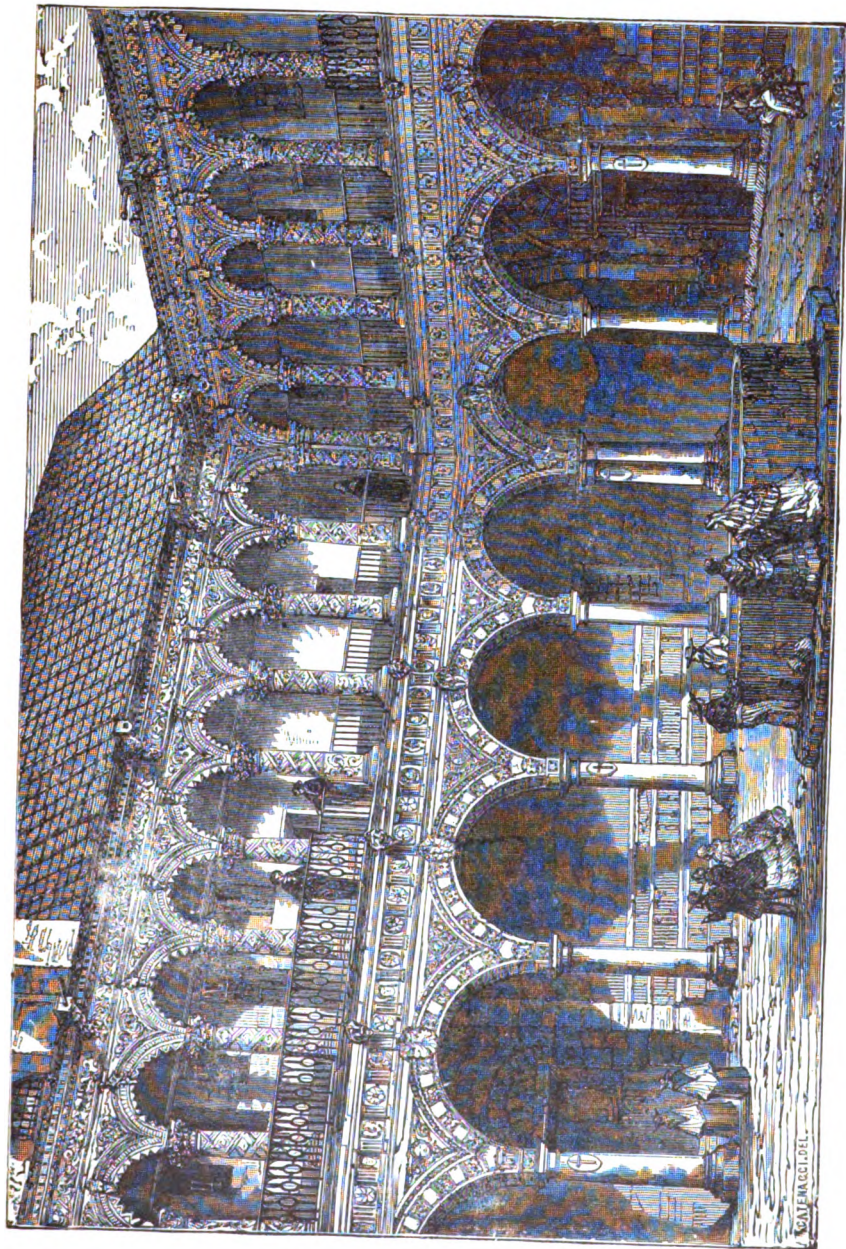
<sup>1</sup> A few old works, brought home by the author, are now in the Public Library of Boston.

improved and utilized the labors of others that the whole territory bears the impress of his mighty mind. His work, "A Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain," though now chiefly useful as giving statistical information regarding the country previous to and at the period of his visit, must yet be taken, as a later writer truly says, as the *point d'appui* for the works of all travellers coming after him. Though perhaps he did not discover here much that was new, or throw any new light upon the history of the people, he yet brought afresh to the notice of the world the writings of the old historians, revived an interest in archæology, and set before all Europe the great natural resources of a country then inhabited by an oppressed people. His books have been a mine of wealth for subsequent historians, and have indeed served not only as a *point d'appui*, but as a very material portion of their productions.

No building in the city, except the former residence of Humboldt, so forcibly brings to mind the great *savant* as the mint, — the *Casa de Moneda*. Though all the prominent points of the valley, such hills as Chapultepec, El Peñon, and the Cerro of Guadalupe, are associated with his astronomical observations and trigonometrical surveys, yet this Casa de Moneda recalls that vast array of figures with which he demonstrated the actual coinage of Mexico from remote times up to the period of his visit. Not millions, but *billions*, are necessary in expressing in dollars the vast treasure that has passed through this mint, entering in crude ingots and departing in glittering *pesos*. The wealth of Montezuma and the Incas of Peru combined has been poured into this establishment since its foundation, since its first coinage in 1535 to the present day. The accumulated treasures of those great monarchs represented the slow accretions of centuries, but the silver flood that is now flowing into the *apartado* represents a stream that promises to increase rather than diminish, — to augment as the rich veins are developed and the old and abandoned mines pumped out and reworked.

The coinage here, for the first three hundred years, was not far from \$2,200,000,000! Though I cannot give exact statis-





CONVENT OF LA MERCED.





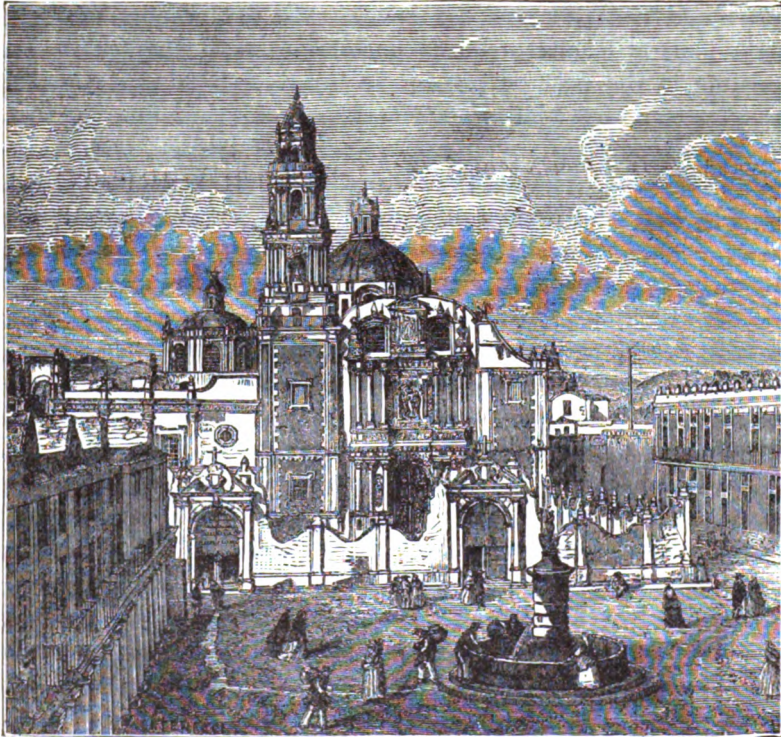
tics of this mint of Mexico, as there are others established in the large cities of the republic, the sum total of all the mints, so far as is known, up to the year 1884 is over \$3,000,000,000.

The coinage only is shown here; millions have been exported of the ore; and an approximate of the whole amount will be attempted when we visit the mines. We may wander through these halls in a state of dazed uncertainty as to whether we are existing in the past or present, so firmly does this silver chain of dates and facts bind us, and lead us back to the first years of Spanish possession. Through centuries of change, and every variety of discord and warfare, the dies of the mint have gone on, stamping the likeness of successive rulers upon the product of the mines. Coins of the realm, of the empire, of the republic, at last the steady stream shows only an even flow of coins of the republic, the emblem of Liberty upon every one. Every peso is stamped with its weight in drams and grains; and good weight it is, every dollar weighing just one ounce; for these good Mexicans hold that an honest dollar is alone the product of an honest man.

Another relic of the past, savoring of hell and iniquity, though now devoted to use as a college of medicine, is the old Palace of the Inquisition, near the Plazuela of San Domingo. Long since abolished, the hideous face of the tribunal of the Inquisition peers at us only from the ashes of the dead and horrible past. Its last victim in Mexico, General José Morelos, was burned in November, 1815. For two hundred and fifty years, since 1571, it had exerted its baleful influence, but was crushed, with the last vestige of Spanish power, in 1821. The Plazuela is now occupied as a market in a small way, by poor people, and the odor of sizzling pork and *tamales* rises above the very place where heretics and apostates were once roasted and toasted to a crisp.

It is difficult to wander far from your door without encountering a hospital of some sort; which fact speaks well for the people. Since the suppression of the monastic establishments and the banishment of the sweet sisters of charity, the government has taken these hospitals under its charge. By the

admission of both friend and foe it has discharged its duty faithfully, and the sick and afflicted of all classes have only to mention their particular complaints when they are at once assigned to their proper wards.



CHURCH AND PLAZA OF SAN DOMINGO.

Equally numerous are the theatres and dance-houses, the largest of the former being the National,—*Teatro Nacional*,—in which are brought out many things interesting to American as well as Mexican. A defect in all Mexican theatres, and a very objectionable feature, is the custom of allowing the “prompter” to be not only seen, but heard. The perpetual buzz that precedes the actor’s utterances is inexpressibly annoy-

ing. Yet the Mexicans submit to such an imposition, the result of negligence on the part of the actors, and apparently are not inconvenienced by it at all. Cigarettes between the acts, and frequent exchanges of calls, are permissible. As the great city is now lighted by electric lights, and electric clocks connected with the astronomical observatory are displayed in prominent places, no one need fear to wander about its streets, even at night, except in remote and unilluminated suburbs.

Very near to the city, once situated, in fact, at the end of the shortest of those four causeways leading out of ancient Mexico, is Tacuba, two miles from the Alameda. In going to this interesting suburb, you take the car at the plaza, and pass through, among many others, the avenue of illustrious men, *Los Hombres Ilustres*, which is very wide and straight, and leads directly out into the country, though changing its name half a dozen times before it reaches open fields. Lying to its right, beyond the Alameda, is the abode of some of the men who have made, not only this street, but the whole republic, illustrious. They reside in a silent quarter called San Fernando, the *pantcon*, or cemetery, of San Fernando. Most of the great men of Mexico are dead; the greatest lie here, either sepulchred beneath costly marbles, or shelved in the *columbaria*, after the city fashion in this country.

By far the richest sculpture is that above the remains of Juarez, the "Washington of Mexico," its Indian President, its wise ruler. There lie buried, also, several of the unfortunate generals and leaders of the people, who have been executed by their countrymen, either by the people because they leaned toward Spain, or by the Spaniards because they favored the people. They died for their country, all of them, and through their deaths, though they fell fighting on different sides, is their beloved land now made glorious. I wonder if there will be any reproaches in order when the last trump shall summon all these heroes to their final awards. Let us imagine them pleading their cases.

"I," for instance, says Iturbide, "struck the decisive blow that freed my country from the yoke of Spain."

"Yes," will reply some rank republican, "and set up an empire of your own."

"But I first blew the trumpet-call of freedom!" will claim the bold Hidalgo.

And some member of the Church party will retort: "And in so doing sealed the doom of your Catholic mother."

The irrepressible Santa Anna will doubtless attempt to prove that he was the saviour of Mexico; but some of his numerous enemies will fling at him his supreme selfishness, and enumerate his defeats at the hands of the Americans.

Guerrero and Comonfort, and a host of generals, who made their fortunes and lost their lives in the cause, fighting in the light that then shone on them, will not allow themselves to be ignored. Miramon and Mexia will point to their martyrdom in the cause of the Church and the Empire, while Maximilian will loftily, and perhaps justly, claim that the imperial government he represented and gave his life for was the only one fitted for Mexico. Juárez will undoubtedly rest serenely confident that the peace and progress resulting from his administration is his title to a seat among the elect. But what will they all say when there appears the apparition of the great warrior who made their feeble exercise of power a possibility? Will they not shrink before his terrible features, and allow him a hearing without interruption? Cortés, the conqueror, the chosen of the Lord, the fighter for the faith, the murderer of Indians of royal blood, the founder of Spanish dominion in New Spain,—all must bow before him, unless the Aztecs, whom he destroyed, be allowed to have a voice in the matter. Montezuma and Guatemotzin! what burning brands ye could cast at the Spanish bigot! Would he bow his head before your reproaches, or would he fling at you the long record of the victims of the sacrifice murdered by you and your ancestors? The record of Cortés is not a true one, if he would not overwhelm you with evidence that he did the world a service in destroying you and your religion.

Now, not all these heroes are buried here in San Fernando, but the few that are, having represented politics of such differ-

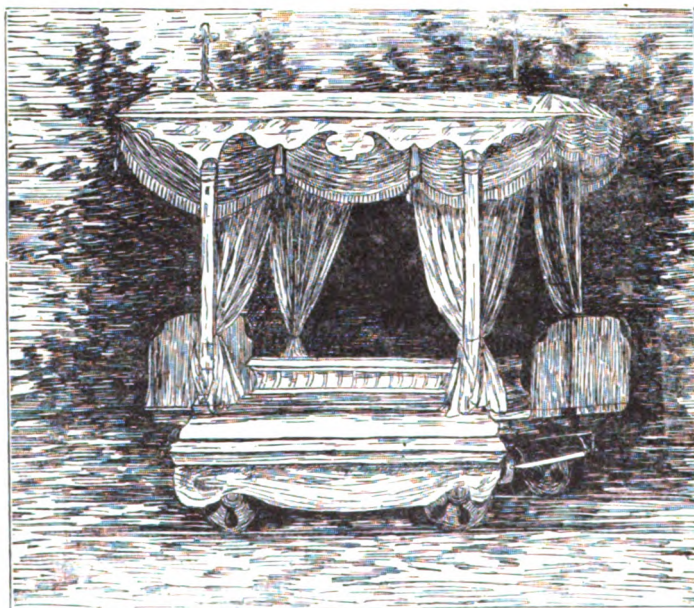
ent complexions, suggest the thoughts expressed above. Who is to judge which of these men were in the right? It is my opinion, that no more difficult problem will arise at the last judgment, than when these Mexican heroes shall put in their appearance for a final award.

In the cities the cemeteries are well cared for; marble busts and monuments mark the resting-places of famous dead, while tiers of sealed cells of masonry hold the remains of many more. But in the country it is different, and they fall into terrible neglect. In obedience to custom, that ordains that no grave can be held longer than for a certain term of years, the grave is opened, and room made for another occupant at the expiration of the time in the deed. Once dead, forgotten. After a few years their bones are dug up and thrown into a charnel pit in the corner of the cemetery, and their places occupied anew. A spectacle to move one to tears is this, of the last remains of man, of woman, and of youth treated as though but a portion of the meaner clay around them. I have seen grinning skulls, with eyeless sockets, and long tresses yet attached to them, which told that the spirit of gentle woman once resided there, cast out in the charnel pits, to become the sport of the elements and the scorn of beholders. These ghastly emblems of death are too often the ornaments of altars and niches in the churches, and they may be seen ranged in rows upon churchyard walls, and piled up at the bases of crosses and at the feet of shrines. But, little by little, Mexico is purging herself of these emblems of a moribund Church, and they will soon cease to offend the senses of the traveller in any part of the republic.

When horse-cars were first introduced into the city of Mexico, Señor E——, the manager of the lines, conceived the plan of purchasing all the hearses. Then he put funeral cars on the branch running to the cemetery, and the result was that everybody wishing to bury in consecrated ground was at his mercy. It soon, however, came to be the fashion to visit the graveyard in the horse-cars, and all except the very poorest people might avail themselves of this privilege. A funeral procession of this sort passed me one day in the Plaza, the car draped



in white, the white coffin exposed to the glare of day and the gaze of the populace, the horses with nodding plumes driven by a spruce young man in conventional uniform, and the car containing the "mourners" gliding smoothly over the rails. The price for service is graduated to suit the taste and necessity of every one, being from above one hundred dollars down to as low as three, depending upon the number of horses, equipment of the hearse, and number and livery of attendants.



A FUNERAL CAR.

Of the many churches in the city, all equally attractive in their internal decoration, no one is more so from its exterior ornamentation than that of San Hypolito, not far from the Panteon. It was rebuilt in 1599, where, it is said, Cortés once had a hermitage, in commemoration of the expulsion of the Spaniards from the city. On the corner of the wall enclosing the church is a carving in stone, representing an eagle flying away with an Indian. Whether it is intended to convey the

idea of victory for the Indian or of defeat, of the rapacity of the conquerors or the translation of the Aztec to realms of supernatural bliss, has never been satisfactorily explained. Near this church, tradition has it, was the ditch which Alvarado leaped, on that night of general disaster, the *Noche Triste*. Commander of the rear guard, he was one of the few who escaped, and claimed to have owed his life to a leap across one of the canals, from which the bridge had been removed, in the causeway leading to Tacuba. But Bernal Diaz, writing fifty years after the events of that night, says that the aperture was too wide and the sides too high for him to have leaped, let him have been ever so active. "As to that fatal bridge, which is called the 'Leap of Alvarado,' I say that no soldier thought of looking whether he leaped much or little, for we had enough to do to save our own lives."

We are on the way now to the "tree of *Noche Triste*," but there are so many objects of antiquity connected with the early history of the city that we cannot avoid frequent halts. The aqueduct of San Cosme, which ends in a sculptured fountain, is beyond the portion of the street known as Buena Vista, where there are some fine houses and gardens of wealthy citizens, and a little farther is the gate stormed by the Americans when they charged down the line of the aqueduct upon the city. Just where the giant water-way turns abruptly westward and stretches out towards Chapultepec is a spot no loyal American should fail to visit, — the cemetery set apart for the burial of foreigners. It is called the American cemetery, though more Germans are buried there than countrymen of ours, and adjoining it is the English portion, both densely shaded, both neatly kept, and fragrant with the flowers planted here in profusion. At the west end, towards Chapultepec, is a monument, a granite shaft with marble dies, on one of which is inscribed, "To the memory of the American soldiers who perished in this valley in 1847, whose bones, collected by their country's order, are here buried"; and on the other, "Contreras, Churubusco, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, Mexico." It occurred to me that the Mexicans must be a forgiving people, that they allow

such an humiliating reminder of defeat to stand on the border of their chief city. It would have been more generous in our people to have omitted the names of the victories, content to have a simple monument over our brave soldiers; for we need no reminder of that buried past, now that our former foe is marching with us hand in hand to an assured future of prosperity. The cemetery lies just clear of the suburbs, and where the level fertile fields commence. When I was there the freshest grave was that of Colonel Greenwood, who had been assassinated a few months previously, while surveying the line of the National Railroad: flowers were yet fresh upon it.

About a mile from the stone bridge here is the tree we are looking for; it is a charming walk, — or it was that day in April when I first made my pilgrimage, — through fields green with alfalfa and bordered with trees and maguycs, and before you are aware of fatigue, after turning a sharp bend in the road, the famous tree rises before you; — a grand old cypress, that would attract our attention were it not surrounded with that halo of history. Its swelling trunk is said to be sixty feet around, though its jagged limbs, blasted by many a storm and worn with age, do not reach far above the little chapel that squats beside it. This chapel was erected in memory of that night of dreadful battle, when the Spanjards, driven like sheep before the hordes of Aztecs, perished as never before in the New World, trodden under foot, with their backs to the enemy. *La noche triste* they called that awful night of black despair, — “the sorrowful night,” — and this aged cypress, that still stands in defiance of the assaults of time, *el árbol de la noche triste*, the tree of the sorrowful night. Here, in this village of Popotla, Cortés sat down upon a stone, and wept at the loss of his soldiers; — beneath this tree, it is affirmed by some, — at all events, near this spot. Alluding to this circumstance, an ancient writer sings dolefully: —

“In Tacuba was Cortés, with many a gallant chief;  
He thought upon his losses, and bowed his head with grief.”

The town of Tacuba is about a quarter of a mile farther, and not a great distance beyond is Atzacapotzalco, once the seat



of a native kingdom, which fell with that of Montezuma. No ruins here, or remains of the sacred edifices that existed at the first coming of the Spaniards, save a low mound and scattered fragments of pottery. Both villages are easily reached from the city, and both contain religious establishments, that of Atzacapotzalco being of great proportions.



TREE OF NOCHE TRISTE.

The church, or chapel, standing hard by the tree of *noche triste*, seems abandoned to the Indians, and is very old,—old enough to carry the thoughts back to that sad night of the first of July, 1520. The

Aztecs relaxed their pursuit here at Popotla, else not a Spaniard would have remained alive to tell the tale; and, though harassed by the inhabitants of the towns about, the soldiers made good their escape, on the day following, to Otancalpolco, where they fortified

themselves in a temple on a hill. Thence, after a brief night of rest, they marched under guidance of a single Indian towards Tlascala, their place of refuge; though not without another battle, in which they came near being annihilated. Upon the hill where they obtained their first relief, and a little time to

dress their wounds, there was erected some years later a church dedicated to Our Lady of Succor, — *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*, — and this Virgin of the Remedios was a long time honored, and the people made pilgrimages to her shrine. She was a faithful saint, and did all she could for her worshippers; but as she was the saint of the Spaniards, she was deposed in the revolution, and now the Virgin of Guadalupe reigns supreme.



AZTEC POTTERY.

## XIV.

### THE MEXICANS AT HOME

**I**T may have occurred to the reader, by this time, that the great city I have been describing, that cloud-dwelling capital of Mexico, is lacking in population; that its magnificent houses, hotels, and public edifices are tenantless. Yet such is not the case; for at least 280,000 people inhabit there. The reason that I have not before described them particularly is, that I wished to complete each topic as I took it up, to convey to the mind of the reader a distinct and lasting picture.

Before turning our attention to the Mexicans, let me confess that I have many misgivings as to the result. I know that it is the custom to abuse the Mexicans, to affirm that no good thing can, ever did, or ever will, come out of their country. At the outset, let me state that I shall not here indulge in invective. As a traveller who has seen the Mexican in nearly all the existing phases of life, who (coming from a country radically different in its internal life) shared, perhaps, in the customary prejudices against these people, but who has since dispassionately studied them by their works, and through the works of others, I may be permitted to express the belief that my views are substantially correct. But lest I should seem prejudiced, one way or another, I shall mainly present, in the following pages, the opinions of other writers.

Of twelve millions of people comprising the population of Mexico, at least one third are pure Indians, aborigines, indigenous to the soil; one sixth, Europeans and their Creole descendants; and one half, Mestizos, or "mixed" people. According to the latest census (1886), the entire mass of the population is divided as follows:—

Indians ( <i>raza indigena</i> ) . . . . .	4,500,000
Europeans and their descendants (Creoles) . . .	1,500,000
Mestizos ( <i>raza mezclada</i> ) . . . . .	6,000,000
Total . . . . .	12,000,000

As to the peculiarities of this people, let me quote from Señor Don Garcia Cubas, a learned and observant native of Mexico. "The difference of dress, customs, and language," he says, "makes known the heterogeneousness of the population. . . . The habits and customs of the individuals who compose the Creole division conform in general to European civilization, particularly to the fashions of the French, with reminiscences of the Spanish. Their national language is Spanish; French is much in vogue, whilst English, German, and Italian are receiving increasing attention. The nearest descendants of the Spaniards, and those less mixed up with the native race in Mexico, belong by their complexion to the white race. The natural inclination of the mixed race to the habits and customs of their white brethren, as well as their estrangement from those of the natives, is the reason that many of them figure in the most important associations of the country, by their learning and intelligence, including in this large number the worthy members of the middle classes. From this powerful coalition, the force of an energetic development naturally results, which is inimical to the increase of the indigenous race (the Indian), not a few of the natives themselves contributing to this fatal consequence, who, by their enlightenment, have joined the body I have referred to, thereby founding new families with the habits and customs of the upper classes."

From this we may infer the gradual extinction of the native Indian race, by gradual absorption into the more powerful mixed class; yet, although they are slowly melting away in the north, in the south they are increasing in number, until the country south of the capital is to a great extent in their possession.

The original stock of Mexico is the Indian, and, in pursuance of my plan, — to commence at the bottom and work upward, — we will inquire wherein the Mexican Indian is peculiar.

It need not be stated, for the information of American readers, that the Indian is of a brown or olive color; he has little or no beard, is rather under medium height, generally stout or corpulent, with muscular thighs, broad chest, and rather slender arms; he is not over strong, but capable of great feats of endurance, and is the entire reliance of the country for work in the mines and agricultural labor. The Indian, says the German traveller Sartorius, invariably retains his national dress, which is as simple as the whole mode of life of these children of nature. The man wears short, wide drawers of coarse cotton or deer-skin, which seldom reach to the knee, and a sort of frock of coarse woollen cloth, fastened around the hips by a belt; a straw hat and sandals complete his dress, which is devoid of all ornament. The females wrap themselves in a piece of woollen stuff that passes twice around the body, but is not closed with a seam; this is girded round the waist by a broad colored band, and reaches to the unshod feet. The upper part of the body is covered with the *huipile*, a wide garment closed on all sides, reaching to the knee, and furnished with two openings for the arms. The hair, tied up with a bright ribbon, is either wound about the head in a thick roll, or hangs down in two plaits; large earrings and bead necklaces complete the attire. The Indians distinguish their tribes by the color and fashion of their simple clothing. Wearing shoes is considered by them a departure from the good old fashion.



MEXICAN INDIAN.  
(From a Wax Figure.)

His dwelling is in keeping with his simple person. In the warm, well-wooded regions he builds of wood, and of palm leaves and stalks; on the table lands, of unburnt brick (adobe), with a flat roof of stamped clay supported by beams. Inside the hut burns, day and night, the sacred fire of the domestic

hearth. Near it are the *metate* and *metapile*, and an earthen pan, *comale*, for baking the maize bread. A few unglazed pots and dishes, a large water-pitcher, cups and dippers of gourd shell, comprise all the wealth, and a few carvings of saints (perhaps) the decorations. Mats of rushes or palm leaves answer for seats, table, and bed, and for their final rest in the grave. A mattock and hoe, nets perhaps and strings; the weaving apparatus of the woman (a few sticks), and the scanty provisions, hang on the wall and from the rafters. The Indian still uses the ancient *temascale*, or steam-bath, — a vaulted adobe oven, just high enough to sit upright in, where stones are heated and water poured on them to generate steam, — and practises simple remedies for his few diseases. His food is mostly vegetables and fruits. He distils and brews his own liquors; on the coast, palm wine, and rum from sugar-cane; on the table lands, *pulque* from the agave, the fermented juice of the *tuna*, or prickly-pear, *chicha*, *chilote*, etc. Maize is their support, and this is planted everywhere.

After the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, the lands of the Indians became the property of the invaders; but upon remote ranges of mountains, and in unhealthy coast regions, they retained land, because the conquerors feared to settle there in scattered bodies. A reactionary Spanish law granted to each Indian village a free possession extending 600 varas (1,800 feet) from the church, in all directions, and in addition to this a square tract of 3,600 feet base line. This they still possess and can cultivate in common, though many prefer to work on plantations as day-laborers. The Indian is always in debt, and as he can never leave an estate until he has worked out his indebtedness, he exists in a state of peonage which is a mild sort of slavery. They carry on few branches of industry, but have great capacity for making ornaments, and for manufacturing "antiquities," which are bought by unsuspecting travellers and deposited in museums as genuine relics of the past.

These people are trained porters and bearers of heavy burdens; they will sometimes go eighty or a hundred miles to market, and often thirty or forty, with loads of provisions,

chickens, etc., that will bring only a dollar or two at the most. They have a peculiar dog-trot, which they keep up hour after hour and day after day; some of the Indian couriers, through their knowledge of paths and by-ways, have been known to accomplish the distance between certain points in less time than the mail-coach. Their ordinary load for a long journey is from seventy-five to a hundred pounds, but in the mines they climb up the primitive ladders — merely notched poles — bearing four hundred and even five hundred pounds of ore.

The Indian is contented with the little he gets, and if a little remain it is almost invariably spent at the *pulquerias* — the liquor-shops — before he departs for home. Although the Indians form villages and settlements by themselves, and in the city of Mexico dwell in a suburb apart from the whites, yet they freely mingle in the streets, "a people within a people," says the authority from which the preceding account has been mainly drawn; they remain apart, interfering in none of the affairs of the upper classes, and confining even their quarrels to their own class. Humble and obedient, their self-abasement is such that they accept and apply to themselves the reproach of the whites, a term that implies that they have no understanding. A white man is to them a *gente de razon*, — a man of intelligence, — while the Indian is called a *gente sin razon*, or a man without reason, — of no understanding.

Further research into the Indian question may prove tedious to the general reader, and so we will leave the subject, merely pausing to state that the difference between the nomadic Indian of the Western prairies and the agricultural Indian of Mexico is hardly greater than that existing between the Aztec of the valley of Mexico, or the Yaqui of Sonora, and the native of



INDIAN WOMAN.  
(From a Wax Figure.)

Tehuantepec and Yucatan; in a word, there are Indians and Indians. We need only note that the languages and dialects spoken by the various Indians of Mexico number one hundred and twenty, besides sixty more which are known to have become extinct.

The race which was imposed upon the country at the coming of the Spaniards should be the next to attract our attention, since it is from the union of this with the aboriginal that the representative Mexican is produced. The Creoles (*Criollos*) are either Europeans or of European parentage. At the time of the revolution, 1810-1821, a term of contempt was used in speaking of the Spaniards; they were called Gachupines. The Creoles were at one time the gentry, the aristocracy of Mexico, and even have aspirations in that direction now. In them, says Sartorius, we recognize the features of the Spaniard of the south, the conquerors and first colonists having been Andalusians. They are gentle and refined, yet vain and passionate, excellent hosts, delightful companions, addicted to gaming, and passionate admirers of the fair sex. The latter number among them many exceedingly lovely women, with dark complexions, large, languishing eyes, lithe and delicate forms, and dainty feet and hands. They are so closely immured in their prison-like dwellings that the foreigner has few opportunities for judging of their character; but I will venture to affirm that it will compare favorably with that of their sisters of more northern climes. The daughters are closely watched by the mothers, who rarely trust them alone out of their sight. This may or may not be necessary; *materfamilias* thinks it is; the wicked young man, against whom all these precautions are taken, thinks it cruel.

"Domestic life is very different from that of the Germanic races. The life led by the ladies in their boudoirs savors something of the Oriental; they work beautifully with the needle, weave and embroider, play and sing; the intellectual element, however, is wanting, the understanding and the heart are uncultivated, and sensuality therefore easily obtains the upper hand. . . . Taken altogether, the morals are more lax even





THE BEAUTIFUL CREOLE.

(From a Photograph.)



than in Spain, and yet less corrupt than in the large cities of Europe." This opinion is given by a writer who is commended in unqualified terms by Señor Cubas, himself a Mexican, or I should have much hesitancy in accepting it. Personally speaking, I saw no indication of this laxity of morals among the better classes, although among certain Indian tribes women of easy virtue are the rule rather than the exception.

In their dress, the Creoles differ in no important particular from the French, the ladies especially conforming to the latest fashion plates from Paris, with this exception, that at morning mass, and in making unceremonious calls, they wear that graceful Spanish head-dress, the *mantilla*; and the gentlemen, when on horseback, or in the country, adopt the picturesque riding costume of the Mestizos. They have many lovable traits: their goodness of heart, their cheerful endurance of the petty ills of life, the respect and courtesy paid by children to their parents, and the frankness with which a stranger is received by the family, who all combine to please and entertain him, — these are but few of their amiable qualities.

The deeper we get into this subject, the more delicate becomes the nature of it. We now approach that third race (so called) of Mexico, the Mestizo, or mixed people. Again, although I have already expressed myself regarding the Mestizo character, I shall doubt my ability to deal with it satisfactorily, and shall present the opinions of one longer a resident of Mexico than myself.

"The noblest of the Aztecs," says the author of *Mexico and the Mexicans*, "fell in battle with the Spaniards; their property fell into the hands of the victors, who at the same time became possessed of the families of those who had fallen; the rude warriors married the dusky daughters, who were rendered their equals by baptism. It was not considered a *mésalliance* to marry a noble Aztec girl. The sons of Montezuma, who were educated in Spain, received the title of Count. The Indian aristocracy adopted Christianity, and became amalgamated with the new population. It was not so with the poorer classes, who from the earliest periods had been subjected to the Indian pris-

tocracy, and at the conquest only changed masters. Nevertheless, countless mongrels were born, some in lawful matrimony, some *per nefas*; and during three centuries the priest and the monk, the soldier and the young Creole, have continued to engraft the Caucasian stock on the wild trunk. Thus arose the



MESTIZO.

(By a Native Artist.)

numerous Mestizo population, which has inherited in part the brown hue of the mother, but also the greater energy and more vigorous mind of the father.

"The Mestizo, then, is properly the offspring (not always properly begotten) of white father and Indian mother. He has an inborn originality, and is the representative of national customs and peculiarities. He is a magnificent horseman; one might take him for an Arab, as, lance in hand, he rushes past upon his light steed. In the warmer regions he wears (on Sundays) a carefully plaited white shirt, wide trousers of white or colored drilling, fastened round the hips by a gay girdle, brown leather gaiters, and broad felt hat, with silver cord or fur band about it. The peasants, or *rancheros*, are usually distinguished by the *calzoneras*, or open trousers

of leather ornamented with silver, with white drawers showing through, a colored silk handkerchief about the neck, and the *sarape*, — the blanket-shawl with slit in the centre, resembling a herald's mantle. The women seldom wear stockings, though their dainty feet are often encased in satin slippers; they have loose, embroidered chemises, and a woollen or calico skirt, while the *rebozo* — a narrow but long shawl — is drawn over the head, and covers the otherwise exposed arms and breast."

These are the elements that go to make up the Mexican people: Indians, Creoles, Mestizos. The last constitute the great majority of *rancheros*, or farmers, and *arrieros*, or mule-drivers;

and in this latter capacity, often in the charge of great *conductas*, or trains, of treasure-laden animals, have always proved honest and trustworthy messengers.

The Mestizos are of pleasant countenance, when of good extraction, of full figure, with complexions which, though swarthy, are yet fresh, and sometimes rosy. As servants, the Mestizos are generally faithful, not over fond of ablution, but having high regard for their masters and mistresses. Always aspiring, the Mestizo is rapidly drawing away from the Indian progenitor, and assimilates with the white race; it is said that Mestizos of the third generation cannot be distinguished from the Creoles themselves. As politicians, they have ever been successful, taking to law, also, as naturally as to the profession of arms. Not alone in point of numerical superiority, but as regards the real possession of power, through peculiar fitness for holding political office, the Mestizos are the dominant people of Mexico to-day.

But there is a class of Mestizos which a truthful delineation of Mexican society compels me to mention, not so creditable to Mexico by half as the poorest and most degraded of the Indians. I speak of the *Lépero*. The union of the worst of the Spanish with the worst of the Aztec race produced a progeny that exhibited all the vices, without a single virtue, of the parent stock. Time, instead of ameliorating, has hardened him, and the miserable lepero is the vilest specimen of humanity, the most degraded, most devoid of principle and honor, to be found on the American continent. And what is the lepero? Let Brantz Mayer, a close observer of the Mexicans for quite a length of time, answer this question: "Blacken a man in the sun, let his hair grow long and tangled, and become filled with vermin; let him plod about the streets in all kinds of dirt for years, and never know the use of brush or towel, or water even, except in storms; let him put on a pair of leather breeches at twenty, and wear them until forty without change or ablution; and over all place a torn and blackened hat, and a tattered blanket begrimed with abominations; let him have wild eyes and shining teeth, features pinched by famine into sharpness, and

breasts bared and browned; combine all these in your imagination, and you have a recipe for a Mexican lepero."



INDIAN SERVANT.

In fine, the lepero is the most worthless kind of proletarian, a beggar whom no one can escape from, and whom no one can intimidate. Cortés mentions the swarms of beggars that existed in the Aztec capital in his time; they are also spoken of by Humboldt; they were the terror and disgust of every viceroy, except Revillagigedo, who, in the latter part of the last century, successfully dealt with them. In the revolutionary period they committed unheard of atrocities, and upon the entry of the American troops into Mexico it was the leperos who, let loose from the jails, murdered and pillaged friend and foe alike. To-day we find them on every street and corner, curled up in the portals of the churches, sleeping at noon in the shade of every sanctuary. It is on feast days that the lepero particularly shines, as witness this portraiture by the clever Sartorius: —

"The lepero has actually spent a *medio* (six cents) in order to convert the crusts of dirt, which had stood in bold relief on his

face, neck, and hands, into the natural brown. . . . Many of them are duly married, but the majority of them certainly not. They feel, however, the necessity of sharing their lot with a gen-

tlar being, and surely this may be achieved, as there are plenty of damsels of this class, who, like the male lepero, are enamored of freedom. Without the blessing of the priest, they live perhaps happier than with it. . . . No popular festival, no church consecration, no marriage, takes place in the suburbs, without some of the leperos wounding or killing each other. No one interferes as the fight goes on, each with a knife in one hand and a cloak wrapped about the other, until one falls, and they all disperse, leaving him with his weeping mistress. . . . These proletarians consist almost exclusively of Mestizos, — the Indians, poor as they seem to be, are not regarded as such, — their number mainly recruited from illegitimate children."

As to stealing, the lepero is a thief from his mother's arms. It is a fact, and I state it as confirmed to me by the chief of police, that nine out of every ten of the boys and men found in the streets of Mexico peddling papers or lottery tickets, or soliciting light employment generally, are thieves and pickpockets, and only approach you on the lookout for an opportunity to plunder you. So numerous are they that the police cannot distinguish the bad ones, as in the United States and in European cities, but class them all as capable of any crime.

The pawnbrokers are the great receivers of stolen goods in this country; the so-called *empeños* are pawn-shops. Washer-women of the lepero class pawn the clothes of unsuspecting and trusting Americans when given them to be washed, and more than one engineer has had to visit some *empeño* and pay down the cash for garments that were already his to get them out of pawn. Either one by one, or all at a time, these garments are gathered into the maw of the Mexican "uncle."

Along the line of the great Mexican Railroad, from Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico, nothing is left outside after dark, — nothing that the strength of two men can lift. Even the car-couplings are taken inside the station and locked up. This road once introduced air-brakes on their cars, but the workmen punched holes in the pipes and stole the tubing; so they were taken off. On the National road, and doubtless on all others also, they stole the bolts that fastened the rails to the ties, until they were finally

riveted on. One of a gang of workmen undertook to steal the cap off a cartridge of dynamite, with the result that he and several others went to their reward.

Brantz Mayer relates a good story of an Englishman, who, while walking one of the principal streets of Mexico, felt his hat lifted gently from his head, and looked upward just in time to see it sailing aloft, suspended by a hook to a line which the sagacious lepero had let down from a lofty window. He also relates that some years ago three Mexicans stopped another, in broad daylight, and took away his cloak. "His cloak gone, he naturally imagined that the robbers had no further use for him, and attempted to depart. The vagabonds, however, told him to remain patiently where he was, and he would find the result more agreeable than he expected. In the course of fifteen minutes their accomplice returned, and, politely bowing, handed the gentleman a *pawnbroker's ticket*. 'We wanted thirty dollars, not the cloak,' said the villain; 'here is a ticket, with which you may redeem it for that sum; and as the cloak of such a caballero is unquestionably worth at least a hundred dollars, you may consider yourself as *having made seventy* by the transaction. *Vaya con Dios!*'"

While I was in Mexico, the following incident was related to me, among others, illustrating the total depravity of the lepero. A good missionary had taken in charge a young man who showed evidences of conversion, and he was installed as janitor of the chapel. I suppose that (if missionaries ever do such things) this good man would have sworn by this janitor. While this converted Mexican was in charge an organ arrived; a day was fixed for the exhibition of this instrument, and the heart of the missionary warmed with pleasure at the thought of feasting the ears of his friends. The evening arrived for the exhibition, the friends arrived, but when the curtain was lifted that concealed the instrument of music it was not there! Neither was the janitor: he had gone and *pawned* the organ!

As the distinction between *meum* and *tuum* is altogether ignored by the leperos, so also life with them is not regarded as sacred; they even look upon death by shooting as honorable,



and rather court it than otherwise. It perhaps comes of such perfect familiarity with fire-arms. Every lepero of distinction carries a revolver. Beg, borrow, or steal, a pistol he must and will have, and carry it in as exposed a place as possible. Should he arrive at the dignity of owning a horse, — though this is extremely improbable, — the lepero becomes a most consummate fop, not only in regard to his horse, but to his equipments. He may parade himself with an incrustation on his skin of seven years' dirt, and with a shirt that has survived six months' continuous wear, but he will invariably carry a large nickel-plated revolver hanging at his side, and showing half its length of barrel below his jacket. To the butt of this revolver he will generally have a cord and tassel, or a steel or nickel-plated chain attached. If he is on horseback, he will have jingling bits, clanking sabre, and a saddle shining with silver ornaments; but he will never be without carbine or revolver. The result of all this display of fire-arms is, that they are perfectly familiar with weapons in a general way, and think no more of pointing a pistol at a man than at a post. It has almost superseded the knife, though that peculiarly Spanish weapon is not infrequently used.

It is a pleasure to me to be able to state that the present government has taken energetic measures looking towards a gradual reformation, if possible, of this worst portion of the criminal class, and the beneficial bullet has disposed of many of those who indulged in the pastime of the highwayman.

Two honest men next claim our attention, and then I have done with the people, except in *genre*, as we may meet them casually on the street, or in our travels. These are the policeman and the water-carrier, — the *aguador*. You meet the former on every corner and in every street, in times of peace; but I



A LEPERO.

have noticed here the same phenomenon that I have also observed in Northern cities; namely, that when you really need



SERENOS.

one of these policemen, when there is any danger near, there is not one within a radius of half a mile. As a body, the

policemen are efficient and well drilled, courteous and affable. At night, the policeman is furnished with a lantern, which he places exactly in the centre of the street, while he sits in a doorway on the opposite corner, and snoozes at intervals in his sarape, or blanket-shawl. At certain periods he disturbs the nocturnal quiet with ear-piercing whistles; in the smaller cities and provincial towns, he cries the time of night, always ending up with "*Tiempo seréno*," or, "All serene." From this the mischievous Mexican youth have nicknamed him the *Seréno*, although his trim appearance now, clad in neat uniform, is in great contrast to the ancient watchmen, who first acquired, and bore with serenity, this appellation.

But commend to me the honest aguador, who, with his burden of earthen jars, his leathern armor and quaint ways, is the most interesting individual of the Mexican street. All the water of the city being brought over aqueducts, it is only obtainable at the fountains, and the aguador thus becomes the most important personage of the household; and as he is the bearer of gossip and news, he is always most welcome.

Society in Mexico differs little from society in Spain, or in Cuba, or other Spanish-speaking country, so that to describe it would be an unnecessary task. There is one phase of it, however, that has reached a development not surpassed either in the mother country or the Gem of the Antilles. I allude to courtship, or perhaps it may be merely flirtation. From my secure post of observation on the *azotea* of my boarding-house, I often noticed a haggard and emaciated young man, pacing the sidewalk in front of the next house. Seeing him day after day, I inquired the reason of his perambulations in that particular spot, and was informed that he was "playing the bear"; or, in other words, paying his attentions to the fair señorita in the balcony above. *Hacer el oso* is the Mexican for this idiotic performance, or "to play the bear," — from the uneasy walking to and fro in one spot, like a bear in a cage. In his hand the imitator of the bear carries either a cigar or cigarette, with which he conducts a correspondence with his *inamorata*, she replying through the medium of her fan or handkerchief. I

was often told that some of these insensate creatures have been known to play the bear for at least *seven years*, and after all did not succeed in capturing the fair ones who had caused them to appear so ridiculous in the eyes of men.

We have inspected the Mexicans in detail, let us now look at them as a whole, and possibly homogeneous race. Says an



EL AGUADOR.  
(From a Wax Figure.)

English author: "To give a brief characterization of the people of any country is always difficult. Especially is this a difficult task when the Mexican population has to be described. The race is heterogeneous, and what may be true of one part of the country may be utterly untrue regarding that of another section. . . . One traveller represents the Mexicans as a fine race, possessing all the virtues of the rest of mankind, and some peculiarly their own. Others will assure the reader, on their word of honor, that they have searched

the vocabularies of the language in which they write, without being able to pick out a series of adjectives strong enough to express the utter turpitude of these degenerate descendants of a degenerate race."

That this is strictly true, let me show by inserting some extracts, — first, from the book of the English traveller, Ruxton: "The Mexicans, as a people, rank decidedly low in the scale of humanity. They are deficient in moral as well as physical organization; they are treacherous, cunning, indolent and without energy, and cowardly by nature. Inherent, instinctive cowardice is rarely met with in any race of men, yet I affirm that in this instance it certainly exists, and is most conspicuous; they possess at the same time that amount of brutish indifference to death which can be turned to good account in soldiers, and I believe that, if properly led, the Mexican should on this account behave tolerably well in the field, but no more than tolerably."

A German traveller, Geiger, has a mild fling at the Mexican, as follows: "The Mexicans prefer the French to all other

nationalities; it is an old liking, which the late war has not destroyed, and hardly even diminished. The reasons for this are many. There exists a certain similarity of character between them; they have been reared in the same religion; and last, but not least, the gushing, ceremonious politeness of the Frenchman fascinates the Mexican, whose vanity is easily tickled by these demonstrative though insincere formalities. When questioned as to their fondness for the French, Mexicans will tell you repeatedly that *un Frances tiene educacion*, which by no means implies that a Frenchman is educated, for in that respect they and Mexicans rank much alike, but that the Gaul knows how to embrace *à la Mexicana*, i. e. to fall into his friend's arms as if he were about to wrestle with him, and actively pat him on the back with the right hand of affectionate acquaintance."

Now in these two extracts we see illustrated the previous statement regarding the heterogeneousness of the population, since, although both speak of the Mexican, each describes a radically different type; the first evidently the Indian, the latter the Creole or Mestizo of the upper ranks. One should be careful to discriminate between the various classes of people. I have had my attention called to the fact, that those who have known the Mexicans longest speak of them in the highest terms. Of such well-informed observers was Brantz Mayer, author of several books on Mexico. He says: "I think it exceedingly reasonable that the Mexicans should be shy of foreigners. They have been educated in the strict habits of the Catholic creed; the customs of the country are different from others; the strangers who visit them are engaged in the eager contests of commercial strife; and besides, being of different religion and language, they are chiefly from those Northern nations whose tastes and feelings have nothing kindred with the impulsive dispositions of the ardent South. In addition to the selfish spirit of gain that pervades the intercourse of these visitors, and gives them no character of permanency, or sympathy with the country, they have been accustomed to look down on the Mexicans with contempt for their obsolete habits, without reflecting that they are not justly censurable for traditional usages, which they had no

opportunity of improving by comparison with the progress of civilization among other nations. Yet, treating these people with the frankness of a person accustomed to find himself at home wherever he goes, avoiding the egotism of natural prejudices, and meeting them in a spirit of benevolence, I have ever found them kind, gentle, hospitable, intelligent, benevolent, brave. I speak, however, of the *juste milieu* of society, wherein reside the virtue and intellect of a country. . . . In fact, regard them in any way, and they will be found to possess the elements of a fine people, who want but peace and the stimulus of foreign emulation to bring them forward among the nations of the earth with great distinction."

This prediction, that the Mexican people needed but "peace and the stimulus of foreign emulation" to bring out their latent energies, is being realized. Mexico is taking a distinguished stand among nations, from which it will soon become impossible for her to recede. I myself, having broken bread and eaten salt with almost every class in Mexico, can truthfully subscribe to the sentiments expressed by the last-quoted author, and do so unhesitatingly. There is more truth in the Mexican's protestations of good will than strangers are ready to credit; he is often so effusive that they lay upon him the charge of insincerity. It may be that he is insincere, that he means utterly nothing when he repeats the ever-ready phrase, *Mi casa está muy á su disposicion, señor*,—"My house, and all it contains, is very much at your disposal, sir"; but he as often means it as not, as I have frequently found, when, far from town or hotel, night has overtaken me near some rancho or hacienda, and I have received the warmest of welcomes from its hospitable proprietor.

## XV.

### FEASTS AND FESTIVALS.—MEXICAN MISSIONS.

*TRAS la Cruz está el Diablo*, "The Devil lurks behind the cross," says the Spanish proverb. Nowhere is this more true than in Mexico. Indeed, his Satanic Majesty rarely takes the trouble to conceal himself, but openly thrusts his impudent face into every gathering of a religious nature that takes place. The religion of the present population of Mexico is extremely anomalous; though nominally Catholics, the Indians are mainly pagans, while the Mestizos and the Creoles have little but the outward semblance. Time, as usual, wreaks its revenges. We know in what manner the religion of the Spaniards was imposed upon the conquered Indians, — at the point of the sword, by the fire and rack. We know that they were "converted" to the new faith by the thousand at a time, and were reckoned good Christians as soon as baptized. We do not wonder, then, that after three hundred years of trial the native population should tacitly agree to the overthrow of priestly power and return to their idols, whom they have so long secretly cherished. Yet it seems strange to us that the successors of Juarez and Gomez Farrias, and those of their associates who are responsible for the downfall of the Church, should be allowed peacefully to rule as they do to-day. To be sure, the Church is exhausted; its final struggle was at the time of Maximilian, and when he fell, and its treasures were appropriated to the use of the nation, it lost more than gold, — it lost its *prestige*. Yes, the prestige of the Church is departed, never perhaps to return; its officers no longer command the popular respect, and its sanctuaries are no longer sacred from the touch of impious hands. Yet the priests of to-day are no worse than before, so

far as their morals and faith are concerned; indeed, I believe they are more worthy of respect than formerly, — that their trials have purified them, and that they are capable, perhaps desirous, of wheeling to the right about, and joining the march of progress, leaving behind them the dead and corrupt superstitions that wrecked them and their hopes.

Stripped of their power by the enactments of 1857, the number of churches reduced to just enough to provide for the actual needs of the people, forbidden themselves to wear their priestly robes in the street, or to fill the air with the perpetual clamor of clanging bells, the clergy of Mexico have held a very painful position. Although we recognize the justness and necessity of the laws of reform, yet we cannot but pity those men in holy office when the thunderbolt fell, who now suffer for the sins of their predecessors.

But though religious processions through the street are prohibited in Mexico, the people do not fail to celebrate the feast days and the festivals. They respect not the Sabbath, nor the priest, but they have a sort of reverence for the saints. Of the three hundred and sixty-five saints in the Mexican calendar, not all, fortunately, are entitled to the honor of a holiday; but many are, — enough seriously to interfere with business, and consume the earnings of the people.

I witnessed several such festivities while in the country; but none seemed to me more grotesque and curious than that of Good Friday, when a final disposition was made of the arch-traitor Judas, against whom the Mexicans seem to have a special spite and wreak their vengeance upon him in a number of ingenious ways. All day long men are parading the streets with effigies of the betrayer hanging from poles, and hundreds are sold, especially to the children, who blow up these images with a gusto and delight only paralleled by our small boy on the Fourth of July. Each image, made of *papier-mâché*, is filled with explosives, and has a fuse, like a fire-cracker, and is touched off by the juveniles amid great rejoicing. The thing culminates at evening, when immense Judases are hung up in prominent places, generally at the intersection of the streets, and exploded in the



presence of delighted crowds. Then, also, the bells in the towers ring out their chorus of rejoicing, and a peculiar apparatus, also in the cathedral tower, makes a loud, crackling noise, which the crowds understand well to mean the breaking of the bones of the thieves on the cross.



THE LITTLE GODS.

Travellers of forty years ago tell us of the murdering of men guilty of a failure to bend the knee at the approach of the Host, when passing through the street attended by the priests; but such a thing is no longer possible. I was surprised one day, on crossing the Plaza, at seeing everybody drop down upon their knees, and received some very black looks from some